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Government**  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

# Community Experiences of Sectarianism

Crime and Justice



# **COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES OF SECTARIANISM**

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Wherever names of participants appear in quotes, these have been changed, to prevent identification.

The list of authors of this report is alphabetical and is not reflective of people's relative contribution to the project. Goodall was Principal Investigator and led the project. The Co-Investigators were Hopkins, McKerrell and J Richardson. Markey, Millar and M Richardson were the researchers on the project; each of them also made a major contribution to the analysis, and contributed sections of the report.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Background**

1. In August 2012, the Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs established the independent Advisory Group on Tackling Sectarianism in Scotland. As part of its work, the Advisory Group made recommendations regarding any further research that would be needed to guide future development of policy. They identified gaps where evidence was lacking and highlighted a need for qualitative research that explores if and how sectarianism affects particular communities, and how it may form part of everyday experience.
2. The Scottish Government then commissioned a number of research projects. The largest of these included a study of public processions, a nationally representative study of public attitudes and experiences of sectarianism, and the current project about community experiences of sectarianism. There were also other projects, such as an analysis of information from the 2011 Census and new questions added to the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey and the Scottish Household Survey.

### **The project**

3. The research was carried out by a team of academics from Stirling, Newcastle, Glasgow, Loughborough and Queen's Belfast Universities. Their disciplines include law, music, social geography, and communications studies. The study was commissioned in March 2014, to conclude in spring 2015.
4. The Scottish Government asked the team to provide the Government and its partners with a more comprehensive understanding of public perceptions and experiences of sectarianism, where and how it manifests itself within particular communities in Scottish society, the impact and consequences of this and what more might be done to tackle it.
5. The methods used were qualitative: the team visited five case study sites across Scotland to hear from local people in interviews and focus groups. Participants were selected by visiting local hubs of social activity and making contact with people engaged in the social life of the community who would introduce us to others with a wide range of life experiences. The project's brief was to consider personal experiences of sectarianism such as perceptions of prevalence, trends over time, marriage and social networks, work, education, and the various settings in which sectarianism may occur.
6. The purpose of the study was not to provide a representative account of the nature of sectarianism in Scotland (an estimate of its prevalence can be found in a recent ScotCen study (Hinchliffe et al 2015). Rather, the team were asked to provide depth and context to research findings from other projects, such as national surveys of victimisation and perceptions of sectarianism, and criminal offending data.

## Themes

7. What follows are the main themes that emerged.

### ***The discursive deficit***

8. Many of the participants said they were not used to discussing sectarianism, and a few were unsure what the term meant, in many cases even when describing personal experiences. This included people from Protestant and Catholic backgrounds. Many seemed to be more fluent when discussing racism, and it may be that some Scots are more accustomed to using the term 'racism' in everyday conversation, and find it easier to make sense of it, than they are as regards 'sectarianism'.
9. The project team did find various experiences of sectarianism across all the case study communities but to widely differing degrees. The 'discursive deficit' was however common across all communities we visited. The reasons for this are not clear, but several possible explanations emerged.
10. It could be that in parts of Scotland today there *is* little sectarianism. Some participants, as we discuss later, suffered sectarianism frequently, but others were unable to think of examples of it in their community, and a few were unhappy about media or governmental discussions of sectarianism that implied it occurred Scotland-wide or that it was part of the national character.
11. Other participants however found it difficult to isolate the concept from other types of prejudice (this included religious prejudice and racism - all types of racism, not only anti-Irish racism).
12. Furthermore, it could be that there is a discursive deficit because some experiences of sectarianism are not spoken about: one participant referred to it as the '*silent topic*' that '*you don't discuss*'. What came out strongly is that even some participants who had seen or experienced sectarianism themselves had tended not to talk about it afterwards. This suggests that some victims of sectarianism (and we did hear many stories, some shocking) may be reluctant to seek social support and their stories will go untold.
13. Another possibility is that people are motivated to ignore signs of sectarianism if they do not see themselves as likely victims, and are resistant to viewing it as a problem in their community. There can also be a problem of 'social indifference', where most members of a majority group do not actively look for markers of difference. This can be positive, but may also mean that they are unaware whether prejudice or bigotry exists.
14. The unfamiliarity of discussions about sectarianism may also be linked to the declining visibility of religion in Scottish public (and private) life. Many of our participants who described themselves as religious nevertheless said that religious faith, or identity, did not form a part of their everyday relationships with other people in the community, beyond places of worship, other than as a source of moral guidance. Many also maintained that the religious faith of

others, whether at work, school or in informal social contexts, was of no relevance to how they socially interact. Usually they asserted this strongly as being their own choice, although it is worth noting here that one young woman spoke about how the Catholics she knew kept their faith '*semi-quiet*'.

15. Another possibility may be that for some Scots, sectarianism is normalised: overlooked because it seems to be a normal part of life. We heard from participants who told us of overt and disturbing incidents of sectarian behaviour in their communities, and who regarded it as a part of their daily life. However we also heard from people who said that they never encountered sectarianism, but who then went on to describe quite developed strategies for avoiding events that they later described as sectarian.
16. Hence, one reason that sectarianism is often seen as a contentious issue may be because it is currently poorly understood in Scottish society. Not only is there widespread variability in people's understanding of what constitutes sectarianism, but also some of our participants did not classify certain forms of prejudiced behaviour as sectarian, even though they had described them in ways that suggested these were based on ethno-religious identity.

### ***Where sectarianism happens***

17. It appeared that community experiences of sectarianism were more intense in west-central Scotland than in the other communities we visited, but stories were told about sectarianism in all of the communities. There were however specific places and times that our participants flagged up as increasing the likelihood of them experiencing sectarianism.
18. The days on which football matches happened (particularly those involving Celtic and Rangers) were mentioned frequently. Some participants referred to being cautious about visiting - or even walking by - specific pubs on these days and to being careful on public transport. Alcohol was frequently cited as an aggravating factor that could cause sectarian behaviour to spill out of contained environments. Parades (whether Loyalist or Irish Republican or both) were also mentioned often. On these sorts of occasions, some participants said they were particularly careful about the colours they wore.
19. Aside from these events, participants referred to a range of places and times when they had experienced sectarianism, or when friends and family members had encountered it. Some were cautious about revealing their surname, their educational background and their family history to others they met because they were concerned about being associated with having a particular religious affiliation.
20. Concerns were raised by a small number of the participants about experiences of sectarianism in employment recruitment practices – such as during interviews when the interview panel have access to their CV and knowledge of their surname and educational background – as well as general treatment in the workplace and access to promotion opportunities. There were however few accounts of this being personally experienced by participants.



Social media, online environments, and email presented another set of locations where many participants recalled experiences of sectarianism.

21. What was striking however was not just where sectarianism happened, but where it did not. Even in the most troubled areas, sectarianism appeared to happen only within particular places or at particular times. Participants might live within a very short distance of each other, yet one might encounter sectarian behaviour daily (such as explicitly anti-Catholic or anti-Protestant abuse) if working in a pub, while another might have difficulty recalling any experience of it at all.
22. It is these distinctive elements that perhaps create so much difficulty for attempts to estimate the prevalence and nature of sectarianism in Scotland. Both in public and in private, there are a great many spaces where sectarianism either does not exist or is not expressed. However there are other times and places where serious problems remain. Where sectarianism does take place it is experienced with varying intensity – sometimes as being aggressive and serious, other times as being subtle and covert.
23. Almost all discussions focused on everyday life. Other than a few mentions of the media, the impact of Mrs Thatcher's governments, and some religious divisions in local government, it was very rare for our participants to bring up the role of the powerful in society as a cause of sectarianism.

### **Gender**

24. Participants described a strong gender element. The examples of sectarian behaviour they gave were usually masculine behaviours directed by men to both men and women. Nearly all of the recollections about sectarian jokes and banter were about men engaging in such behaviour, and indeed, pubs and drinking culture were often the context in which such actions were experienced, overheard or engaged in. Discussions about sectarian family influences too tended to focus on men rather than women.
25. Our participants also criticised masculine cultures. Football, marching, music and parades were often said to create unnecessarily aggressive and intimidating environments. This shapes communities and can infiltrate other spaces, notably public transport and main retail streets on the days around major events.
26. Women were not said to be entirely passive in this. They take evasive action to avoid the risk of conflict, they develop strategies to protect their families, and like men they are vulnerable in public spaces such as the street, the school and the workplace, and in their homes. They too can transmit prejudices though, as some participants mentioned, and women take part in some controversial activities. Nevertheless, when our participants spoke about sectarianism, it was typically men whom they blamed.

### ***Generations and families***

27. Despite rapid changes in Scottish society across generations, many participants nevertheless highlighted the role of families and of older generations in transmitting sectarian beliefs, particularly when these involved what some described as 'bitter' sectarianism. Sometimes this was done by grandparents rather than parents.
28. Some participants said that more 'casual' sectarianism, such as the careless use of offensive language, was declining. However, 'bitter' sectarianism was passed down more successfully. Participants described this sort of sectarianism as more deep-seated and virulent.

### ***Memory and the power of 'exceptional' events***

29. When asked what made something sectarian, participants often referred not just to the intention of the perpetrator (as is usually the case when people talk about racism) but also to the context. Often, this was historical or an old personal memory.
30. Stories of sectarian experiences were sometimes slow to emerge. Participants who related stories that they regarded as serious tended to do so at a late point in the interview, often with much hesitation and rushing through the key details – and what was particularly striking was that in a couple of cases the person did not even recall a very serious incident until well into the interview.
31. Participants in the Western Isles however tended to speak differently, in a more relaxed way, about both their views about sectarianism and any personal experiences. This may be related to the long relationships among individuals in those communities that are part of the everyday life of the islands.
32. It may also be connected with the exceptionally deep and frequent interaction between practising Catholics and Protestants in many parts of the Western Isles. Sectarianism in the Western Isles (where it appears) has a distinctive and older history related to local Scottish Catholicism and relatively little Irish Catholic inward migration. The Western Isles experience is an interesting counterpoint to the common argument that with cosmopolitanism or secularism comes tolerance.
33. To consider incidents merely as unusual or exceptional is to discount what appears to be a lack of social support in some communities to discuss such experiences, making the incidents' impact more severe than they might otherwise be, and also leading the victim to suppress or reclassify the memories of what took place. The contrasts here suggest that one issue for communities is not simply how much sectarianism there is, or how serious the incidents are (even in the eyes of the individuals themselves), but how it is spoken about or ignored, and how it is dealt with. What can be most harmful is a lack of social support.

### ***Jokes, banter, music and other signifiers***

34. Many participants emphasised that the context of potentially sectarian speech is important. Whether jokes and banter were acceptable, many participants said, depended on the intention and the context. If a joke was made to friends, or intended to be inclusive of the people there, it would be less likely to be sectarian. If it was designed to be exclusive, or to justify one way of life as better than another, it was more likely to be sectarian.
35. Songs were often mentioned by our participants as having a particular power to create sectarian meaning. This included not just the literal words, but also where a song was sung or the way it was sung (such as a meaningful pause in a song that hinted at missing sectarian words). Certain songs such as 'The Sash' can at times carry that meaning in the tune alone. Such interpretations are not just assumed by individuals, but are shared and understood across different social groups.
36. Many still found sectarian significance in particular markers of group identity such as the colour of clothing, songs, tunes and flags, the name of the school attended, and the name and spelling of a surname.
37. These were not necessarily understood Scotland-wide, however. Furthermore, all of these distinctions were cut across by age, gender and football affiliation among others. There was no simple east/west, north/south or island/mainland division.

### ***Football***

38. The rivalry between Celtic and Rangers<sup>1</sup> was the issue most associated with sectarianism among our participants. Despite it not being explicitly asked about by the interviewers, a great many participants pointed to Celtic and Rangers as two of the principal sources of sectarianism in Scotland. Many spoke of this rivalry being used as a means to understand a person's cultural, religious, and political background, especially in west-central Scotland.
39. Throughout many of the interviews in the Glasgow and North Lanarkshire case studies in particular, there was an almost immediate conflation between sectarianism and football. Many participants argued that the two issues were so intertwined that they could not be separated. Often, what was evident was the interchangeable nature of the terms Catholic and Protestant with Celtic and Rangers respectively. Pubs and bars affiliated with supporters of either Rangers or Celtic were frequently referred to as Protestant or Catholic pubs, strengthening this association. Some supporters in other towns said that they would not go to Glasgow to see their own team play Rangers or Celtic because they expected to encounter singing, chanting or violence that they felt were sectarian.

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<sup>1</sup> There has been dispute about the status of the name 'Rangers', following the team's liquidation and administration, but that name is used in the full title of the club as it now trades, and we use it here.

40. Recent problems faced by Rangers aside, the modern history of Celtic and Rangers is of two powerful teams with similarly large fanbases and strongly-asserted identities, somewhat evenly matched and in a combative struggle with each other. However, this does not map on to the larger society of Scotland. For many of our participants, Catholicism and Protestantism appear to play a much more muted role in Scottish life than might be supposed from the rivalry of the two teams. Many of our participants did not have religious beliefs and did not associate themselves with a faith. What is also important, though, is that a Catholic *heritage* remains a minority one; most of the Scottish population come from families that were, until recent times, practising Protestant.
41. The focus on the Celtic and Rangers rivalry obscures all this. The rivalry of the teams and their fans is not always sectarian in nature. And when it is, it is not a mirror image of how Scotland's religious groups interact.

### ***Loyalist and Irish Republican processions***

42. There was a great deal of animosity expressed towards these events among our participants, with several arguing that they should be banned altogether. Some pointed out that the months spent building up to parades was divisive in itself. However, the feeling was confined largely to those that were perceived as traditional 'flash points' for sectarian conflict.

### ***Strengthening communities***

43. The solutions that participants identified were often local ones rather than necessarily applicable Scotland-wide. In the Western Isles, it was the close, interactive relationships between the long-standing religious communities, in their own local area, that several participants felt was particularly helpful to preventing and reducing the effect of sectarianism. Elsewhere, several participants said that the constantly changing populations in towns and cities encouraged cosmopolitanism and diluted older, possibly sectarian, identities and values.

### **Conclusion**

44. What has emerged from this study is that sectarianism in Scotland, where it occurs, is not confined to particular communities. It is however an elusive concept. Many participants described it as what might be called a hand-me-down identity, passed on through generations. It is also one that Scots do not appear to discuss in everyday conversation very much. Furthermore, those who have suffered sectarian prejudice and bigotry tend, it seems, to have done so in silence.
45. We encountered many personal stories of experiencing bigotry, but not many of discrimination. However, several participants cited examples of where they felt discrimination still exists. If people believe discrimination to be continuing, they may adjust their lives accordingly so as to avoid instances of it, which would have impact in itself.

46. People's experiences vary hugely. This can depend on the nature of their local community, their religion/religious background, national and ethnic origins, socio-economic status, age, gender, family relationships and all the other familiar factors that might intersect to influence experience and perceptions.
47. But it can also depend on such things as how much time they spend in particular places – and what places, and times, they are able to avoid. Some of our participants did not consider sectarianism to be a problem. For others, there seemed to be a process of 'normalisation' happening, with strategies in place to avoid problematic behaviours and places. A few lived lives where sectarian experiences were difficult to escape.
48. A project such as this one cannot estimate how prevalent sectarianism in Scotland is, nor compare it to ethnic and religious bigotry in other countries. What its findings suggest is that more open discussion is needed, beyond the context of Celtic-Rangers matches and Loyalist and Irish Republican processions, to face down what problems remain and decide how best to deal with them.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 We present here our findings from the qualitative study commissioned by the Scottish Government (Justice Analytical Services) to provide an understanding of the nature of sectarianism in a range of communities across Scotland, including those where it may be most visibly prevalent. The team of academics commissioned to carry out this research were drawn from the disciplines of law, music, social geography, cultural studies, and communication and media studies. The study was commissioned on 14 March 2014, to conclude in spring 2015.
- 1.2 In this chapter we will set out the background to the study and what we were asked to achieve. The chapters that follow will consider our methods, comment on the conduct of our fieldwork and present our analysis of the data collected.

### **The brief**

- 1.3 The project's brief was to consider personal experiences of sectarianism as broadly as possible. This was to include perceptions of prevalence, trends over time, contact between different communities, marriage and social networks, work, housing, education, jokes and banter between friends/acquaintances, and consideration of it within different social settings (such as sports clubs, cultural and community associations, as well as the workplace).
- 1.4 The Scottish Government did not ask that the study provide a representative account of the nature of sectarianism in Scotland (a separate project was commissioned to do that, carried out by the social research institute ScotCen). Rather, what was sought was a more in-depth understanding of how sectarianism may (or may not) manifest itself within the lives of individuals within particular communities. The purpose of the study was to provide depth and context to research findings from other projects, such as national surveys of victimisation and perceptions of sectarianism, and criminal offending data.

### **Background**

- 1.5 In August 2012, the Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs established an independent Advisory Group on Tackling Sectarianism in Scotland. As part of its work, the Advisory Group made recommendations regarding any further research that would be needed to guide further policy development. They identified gaps in which evidence was lacking and highlighted a need for qualitative research that explores if and how sectarianism affects particular communities, and how it may form part of people's everyday experiences.
- 1.6 The need for this research was also identified by the Scottish Government's research branch in Justice Analytical Services, as set out in a 2013 report that called for research to test whether, which and how individual communities are

particularly affected by sectarianism. It suggested that such research should 'focus on geographies within which distinct Catholic and Protestant communities live, either separately or side-by-side' and that '[i]n-depth qualitative research at a local level could help test whether social fractures exist, how that impacts on communities and what could be done to address this.'<sup>2</sup> The focus, they thought, should extend beyond west-central Scotland, where most research has been done, to consider other pockets of Catholic communities, including new migrant Catholic communities.

- 1.7 The Scottish Government then commissioned a number of research projects. These dealt with a range of issues such as analysing information from the 2011 Census and adding new questions to the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey and the Scottish Household Survey. Three in particular were commissioned to look more deeply into the roots of the problem. One was a national survey of nationally representative study of public attitudes and experiences of sectarianism, carried out by the Scottish social research institute ScotCen.
- 1.8 The second project was to consider the community impact of marches and parades (including Loyalist and Irish Republican processions). Its task was to inform discussion about three key aspects of a march or parade: the importance of celebrating identity and freedom of expression for those who take part; the duty of the local authority to prevent crime and disorder and protect public safety and the right of affected communities to express thoughts and beliefs.
- 1.9 The third project was this one on community experiences of sectarianism. The first project focuses on robust estimates across the whole Scottish population; the second, although considering important aspects of the impact of sectarianism on different groups within communities, was not designed to provide an understanding of everyday experiences. This third project was to provide the Scottish Government and its partners with a more comprehensive understanding of public perceptions and experiences of sectarianism, where and how it manifests itself within particular communities in Scottish society, the impact and consequences of this and what more can be done to tackle it.

## **Research objectives**

- 1.10 The specific objectives of our study were:

- To focus on developing an understanding of perceptions of sectarianism in Scotland based on everyday experiences within communities
- To provide a more detailed account of communities' perceptions of the scale and nature of sectarianism in selected areas of Scotland than has been available before now
- To explore and report on understandings and experiences of sectarianism in under-researched locations, in particular those where distinct Catholic

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<sup>2</sup> Justice Analytical Services (2013: 38).

We use the term "Catholic" in this report to mean "Roman Catholic".

and Protestant communities live, either separately or side-by-side, and where there is a history of sectarianism that appears to have persisted in some form until today

- Similarly, to explore and report on understandings and experiences of sectarianism in areas where it is considered to be less of a problem
- To compare the perceptions and experiences of Catholics and Protestants in west-central Scotland with those in other areas of Scotland to see what, if any, important differences exist
- To compare perceptions and experiences of sectarianism among different ethnic Christian groups (including recent migrants)
- To explore and report on how sectarianism is manifested in different social settings and the varying ways in which it is expressed and understood
- To include the experiences of as broad a range of the Scottish population as possible, taking into account the key equality characteristics
- To identify the impact and consequences of these experiences for these communities, and provide insights into how these communities believe they can be strengthened to tackle Scottish sectarianism in its various manifestations
- To draw the findings into a narrative grounded in robust data that can enhance the value of and provide a context for findings from other research, in particular large quantitative studies

- 1.11 The scope of the project was not such that it can provide large-scale quantitative data. Rather, its role was to provide a sturdy foundation of in-depth community-based personal accounts that will complement and enhance other studies. The methods were not designed to capture a representative sample: rather they were designed to gather a well-targeted group of the diverse Scottish population, in particular Catholics and Protestants of various ancestries.

## **2. METHODS**

- 2.1 The team visited five case study sites across Scotland to hear from local people in interviews and focus groups. Participants were selected by team members visiting local hubs of social activity and making contact with people engaged in the social life of the community who introduced us to others with a wide range of life experiences.

### **Choice of case study sites**

- 2.2 Our chosen sites were drawn from across Scotland. We chose five case study areas: Glasgow, Edinburgh, North Lanarkshire, Dundee and the Western Isles. (See Appendix 2 for more information about these choices.)
- 2.3 Within those five areas, we singled out a smaller geographical community to focus on. We identified the communities partly on grounds of their character (having a historical heritage and social areas where locals meet) and partly on the basis of data gathered from the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation



2012 and the Scotland Census 2011 (with grateful thanks to the Demography Division of the National Records of Scotland for assistance).

2.4 We selected our case studies using several interacting criteria:

- The samples should engender a high degree of 'social boundedness' drawn from snowball sampling and participant focus groups with pre-existing social ties. This ensures a level of social connection, which is key to understanding the nature of sectarianism as it exists in communities.
- The locations should offer a diverse selection of Catholic and Protestant populations with contrasting histories to allow for comparison of social distance between various faith groups in communities where they live.
- The locations should offer multiple routes of access to contacting potential participants who belong to dispersed minority communities (by which we mean minorities of many kinds, across the equalities strands<sup>3</sup> and beyond).
- The case studies should include a selection of communities affected by a range of religiously-aggravated offences derived from the COPFS (Crown Office) and Scottish Government statistics.
- The case studies should engage a diverse selection of classes based upon the 2011 Census data.

2.5 The perception of each site as a community was supported in interviews in all the case study areas. Discussion about the precise boundaries has come up regularly in preliminary meetings and in the interviews. We drew each boundary narrowly rather than broadly, to ensure a high level of social connectedness, but were willing to consider participants close by the boundary if they were heavily involved in the social life of that community.

### **Data gathering methods**

2.6 Because of the controversial nature of the topic, all the fieldwork was carried out by the named members of the research team and we discussed every interview and focus group among the team afterwards.

2.7 The research included the following elements:

- 35 semi-structured interviews of between 45 minutes and 2 hours: a minimum of 8 hours of interviews in each case study site
- 8 moderated focus groups: 1 or 2 sessions in each case study site

### **The fieldwork**

2.8 The fieldwork was carried out between June and December 2014. Through a combination of planning and good fortune, we reached a very diverse group of participants. The demographic data for our participants are set out in the appendix. We heard from adults of all ages (including young parents), people

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<sup>3</sup> Certain characteristics are protected by the Equality Act 2010: these are set out in s.4 and they include age, disability, gender reassignment (i.e. transgender), marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

from many religious and minority ethnic backgrounds, men and women, heterosexual and gay, with and without disabilities and with various levels of educational attainment. Some were on very low incomes living in rented homes and unfortunately experiencing lifelong social exclusion; others were on incomes of over £70,000, owning high-value property or in careers with a high-earning trajectory (e.g. doctor, solicitor). Most were somewhere between these.

- 2.9 Each of our interviews and focus groups was transcribed and then checked against the recording by a member of the team. We then analysed them using NVivo software, which makes it easy to categorise conversations into themes and helps challenge bias when researchers analyse what people said.

### **3. OBSERVATIONS ON THE METHODS USED**

#### **Recruiting participants through snowballing**

- 3.1 One of the challenges of the topic and title of the research, as one of our team put it, was that we were asking: 'Would you like to talk to me about something thoroughly negative?'
- 3.2 The subject of sectarianism in Scotland is less taboo than it once was. Nonetheless, it was not an appealing topic for many potential participants - particularly when they are being asked to speak about, and perhaps criticise, their own local community. It was not possible to disguise the topic during recruitment of participants, because it was so strongly focused on sectarianism that such an approach might have been unethical. Our focus was therefore on establishing interest and trust by using the 'snowball' method of reaching participants, and making it clear in our invitation to participate in the research that the project was designed to explore both the existence and absence of sectarianism, in its many possible forms.

#### **The nature of the topic and establishing trust**

- 3.3 We did however have to work very hard to recruit participants. We provided either refreshments or a small payment: this was only mentioned after the participants had agreed in principle to taking part.<sup>4</sup> We found that initial interest sometimes faded when we spoke to potential contacts, despite our emphasising that we were just as interested in hearing from people who are not sure what sectarianism is, who have not experienced any sectarianism or who do not feel that their community is blighted by it. Further explanation usually resolved this, but the problem does demonstrate the value of the snowball approach. It undoubtedly broadened the sample to include participants who were initially reluctant to take part. Several people made it

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<sup>4</sup> We offered refreshments (food and drink) at focus groups and gave a £10 shopping voucher to individual interviewees. Some researchers disapprove of financial rewards for participation because it can have an impact on who comes forward to take part. Our view was that this type of research is time-consuming and stressful for participants, so we decided to include this small token of thanks, and usually mentioned it only after the person had already agreed to participate.

clear during the interview that they had chosen to take part, despite some reservations, because they trusted us and (where there was a third party) the person who arranged the contact with us.

- 3.4 For instance, one woman interviewee (who came from a different religious background from the interviewer, but had a similar social background) spoke about views that she said she would not normally express:

*I can say this because I can identify with you because you are within the same background as myself. So I feel I can ... if I felt that there was any animosity between us, you know, I wouldn't be able to speak so freely ... And you can take out what you want and keep in what you want. (Woman, Interview 1, Edinburgh)*

- 3.5 In several other interviews, we found that participants expected us to tell them something about ourselves before they decided whether they felt comfortable telling us their stories. In the cities and towns this tended to be an explanation about our work or how the team knew each other; in the islands, conversation also covered our families and whether we had any familial relationship with the islands.

### **Selection of questions**

- 3.6 The contentious nature of the topic was also something we addressed in how we conducted our interviews. We drew up a lengthy set of questions but did not ask every question in each interview/focus group. Rather, the team members familiarised themselves with the questions, then asked them selectively, guided by the stories and responses of the people taking part. Also, where it seemed that the tone or focus of a particular question might inhibit answers, or provoke mistrust, we left it out. Furthermore, we began with general, positive questions before moving on to more specific queries addressing sectarianism. Many of them were concrete questions rather than about abstract concepts.
- 3.7 We think this method worked well. In particular, the focus on encouraging storytelling and narrative brought out themes we had not anticipated. Given the exceptionally nebulous nature of sectarianism in its many varieties in Scotland, and the gaps in research evidence, we think that this approach was particularly appropriate. It does however place a lot of discretion in the hands of the fieldworker and is not appropriate for work outside a small, closely-linked team.
- 3.8 We also used a practice developed by ethnographic researchers, in which after every interview and focus group we had a short team discussion by email where the interviewer shared thoughts and asked advice. These observations later became useful for writing the report.

## 4. TALKING ABOUT SECTARIANISM

4.1 In this and the next few chapters, we set out the main themes that emerged.

### The discursive deficit

4.2 One thing that quickly became clear was that many of the participants were not used to discussing sectarianism, and a few were unsure what the term meant. Below is how the first focus group (a group of people aged 18-24 in Edinburgh) began:

Facilitator: *The first thing I want to ask about sectarianism is: are there any words or images that you associate with sectarianism?*

F1: *I don't know what it means.*

M1: *I'm not ... I am going to put my hand up, I don't know what it means.*  
[Laughs]

F2: *Like part of the conflict that's between religion, Protestant, Catholic, between the obvious ones, Protestants and Catholics, and their conflict between them?* [unclear mumbled addition]

M2: *One which history definitely, I think ... One historical sectarian conflict I can really point to is the conflict between Christians and Jews.*

4.3 We encountered several such examples. During an interview in the Western Isles, the participant told a story about protecting an English tourist from abuse. He then said: *'Is that the sort of the thing you want to hear? [...] I don't really know what sectarianism is you see, so ...'* He later added: *'I looked at it last night on the net. I have never thought about it until I spoke to you.'* (Man, Interview 3, Western Isles).

4.4 A Glasgow participant had previously been a member of an Orange Lodge. When asked to comment on claims that the Orange Order was 'sectarian', however, she said: *'Em ... I maybe don't know what that word means ...'* (Woman, Focus Group 1, Glasgow).

4.5 An Edinburgh interviewee kept using the word 'anti-sectarianism' to mean sectarianism, and explained:

*I've never really used the word. I actually have to keep pausing before I say it to you, because for some reason I almost want to keep calling it anti-Semitism ... because that's something that comes up, you know in, like the news and stuff, that's like a phrase that you would hear, but I just never, you never hear it. You never hear anyone say 'anti-sectarianism'.*  
(Man, Interview 5, Edinburgh)

4.6 This sense of unfamiliarity with the term 'sectarianism' came up often throughout the project. The word sectarianism is a common term in media

discourse.<sup>5</sup> It was not however something our participants seemed familiar with talking about - in many cases even when describing personal experiences - and this included people from Protestant and Catholic backgrounds. Frequently, they appeared to cast around for a vocabulary to discuss sectarianism and the ways that it affects both their own lives and those of people they know.

- 4.7 The word 'sectarianism' had the effect at times of interrupting the discussion among participants. This was not simply because of its negative connotations: it seems that this may be a word that does not invoke folk meanings and lay understandings easily. We have not encountered this to the same extent when carrying out fieldwork about racism. It may be that some people are more accustomed to using the term 'racism' in everyday discourse than they are as regards the word 'sectarianism'.
- 4.8 Typically, we opened the discussions by focusing initially on questions about interviewees' family religion or perceptions of community religion, which was a more productive way into deeper discussions about sectarianism.

### **The absence of a problem?**

- 4.9 Several possible explanations for this unfamiliarity with the term 'sectarianism' came up during the research. For some, there was no local problem to be concerned about. An example appears in a focus group in Dundee, about half and half split between participants with Catholic and Protestant backgrounds:

Facilitator: *Do, do you think first of all that sectarianism is a problem in your area or Dundee itself?*

Participant: *No ...*

Participant: *Nope.*

Participant: *No.*

Facilitator: *Okay, so is that, is that a round no?*

Participant: *That is definitely no.* (Women, Focus Group 1, Dundee)

- 4.10 Another interviewee in Dundee, unable to think of any examples of different forms of sectarianism in response to the interviewer's questions, said apologetically:

*I've painted an awfy glossy picture, though. I am trying to think of something, if there was an incident, but I seriously cannae think of one. I really cannae think of ... anything at all, incident, sectarianism-wise ...* (Woman, Interview 6, Dundee)

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<sup>5</sup> For example, a quick search for the use of the word "sectarian" or "sectarianism" in LexisNexis (an online database of news articles) brings up 922 separate sources between December 2013 and December 2014, 884 of them in newspapers.

- 4.11 Others thought it possible that it might happen locally, but never witnessed it themselves. An Edinburgh interviewee struggled to remember any experiences:

*I guess it kinda comes down to what I was talking about that whole feeling of being quite removed from places like here, and how it does feel like something that happens in other places, and yet I imagine it does, it is relevant in places here, and so ... and that's the thing, I think I live in my little middle class bubble and don't support a football team ehm. (Woman, Interview 4, Edinburgh)*

- 4.12 Some had rarely encountered sectarian language. One first heard the word 'Tims',<sup>6</sup> used in that case to mean 'Catholic', from an English friend:

*Participant: ... so I used the expression 'Roman Church' and he obviously clocked that as meaning I was against it, and he says ... eh ... 'what, you mean Tims?' I says 'What?' and he says 'Tims'. And I says 'I don't know what they are' and I had never heard the expression before in my life. Eh, and I'm sure there are lots more expressions that I have not heard either, but I think it's indicative that some of the insults that are common currency in the whole sectarianism thing are not universal, there are lots of communities that just aren't aware of them ...*

*Interviewer: And how old were you when this happened?*

*Participant: Sorry?*

*Interviewer: And how old were you when this happened? I'm just interested to see.*

*Participant: Oh I was in my mid-40s.*

*Interviewer: And you had never heard the term?*

*Participant: No. (Man, Interview 8, Western Isles)*

### **Lack of awareness**

- 4.13 The simple absence of a problem is one explanation, and should not be dismissed. Other explanations however are possible and might fit some of the stories we heard.

- 4.14 Social psychologist Susan Fiske (1993) has found that the powerful are *inattentive* to the individual experiences of those who are less powerful. Denial that sectarianism takes place can be made easier, too, by what sociologist Cheshire Calhoun (1989) calls 'motivated ignorance'.<sup>7</sup> People are motivated to deflect their attention from their own and their social group's

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<sup>6</sup> The term is often used to refer to Celtic fans, with or without the speaker intending a sectarian connotation, but also is used by some specifically to refer to people assumed to be Catholic.

<sup>7</sup> Calhoun (1989: 389). See also the discussion of culpable ignorance in FitzPatrick (2008: 605ff).

discriminatory behaviour, so the boundary between conscious denial and impeded awareness is blurred (Hodson and Esses 2002).

- 4.15 Some of our participants pointed to examples of this. A Western Isles interviewee who had worked for some years in the Central Belt observed that it was difficult for an observer to tell when football banter was light-hearted humour and when it was deeper religiously-motivated mockery:

Participant: ... *they of course are the last people who would consider themselves to be bigots* [laughs].

Interviewer: *Right, why would you say the last people who would...?*

Participant: *Well I think in most cases bigots never see themselves as being a bigot.* (Man, interview 2, Western Isles)

- 4.16 Another reason for being unaware of the prevalence of sectarianism is the declining visibility of religion in everyday life. Theologian David Fergusson (2009: 123) has said, about commentators who discount religion's importance as a source of conflict, that 'Ironically, this may be fuelled by secular incomprehension of religion, which assumes that it cannot be so important as to motivate people in this way.' They assume that 'it simply masks an underlying cause such as poverty, lack of education, or loss of status.'

- 4.17 The term 'secular incomprehension' is also mentioned by another religion researcher in the context of English society, where Protestant hostility to Catholicism has declined, to be replaced by a puzzlement about, sometimes antagonism towards, traditionalist religion, among the growing numbers of people who no longer identify with such ways of life.<sup>8</sup> This again may have fewer opportunities to come to the surface. In an Edinburgh focus group, one young woman who no longer considered herself Catholic said:

Participant: *I haven't actually experienced anything. But it's just like ... A lot of people that I know are just like ... probably, don't really know ... I don't think a lot of people know that I've been baptised and they won't judge it, unless they knew. I've usually kept that quite quiet, so as. Like if they were Catholic then it would be quite different, obviously.*

Interviewer: *And are you aware of anything happening to people you know that are more openly or obviously Catholic?*

Participant: *No-one that I know personally is openly Catholic. To be honest. I think a lot of people who are Catholic probably do keep it semi-quiet in case they do get it like being abused or anything. Just for being Catholic.*

- 4.18 Lastly, normalisation was an important theme that often came up and one that we will consider later in this report. For instance, we heard from individuals

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<sup>8</sup> The term comes from Dennis Sewell, cited and discussed further by Rosie (2004: 1-3).

who said that they never encountered sectarianism, but then went on to describe quite developed strategies for avoiding what we would regard as sectarian activity in their community. They spoke about this as so ordinary that they did not describe this avoidance behaviour as a diversion from their normal social life. Some of the avoidance strategies directly described within interviews ranged from turning one's back on a march or parade perceived as sectarian, altering a regular walking route so as to avoid sectarian flash points such as pubs and clubs, or concealing one's clothing or religious identity in conversation.

### **Social indifference**

- 4.19 One of the difficulties in researching prejudice and bigotry is that strong prejudices are easiest to identify, but it is not just these which can have a negative impact on others. Overt sectarianism is relatively easy to recognise. Low-level hostility is also somewhat recognisable. A particularly difficult set of circumstances confront the researcher, though, when what is happening is 'social indifference'.
- 4.20 The majority groups in Scotland are those who are white, born into a Protestant heritage, born in Scotland, and English-speaking. Listening to our participants, we got the impression that some people, despite not being Protestant-born or Scots-born, are able to mesh with these identities without very much difficulty. This may be because many Scots (whatever their background) regard the differences as unimportant, or it may be that some Scots regard those particular differences as having some significance, but not feel strongly enough about this to look out for clues pointing to them.
- 4.21 If the subtle markers are rarely spoken about, even in private conversation, most members of the majority groups in those social spaces may not recognise that a person is, for instance, Catholic-born, or born outwith Scotland. So, most of the majority may not actively look for markers of difference, and may be ignorant of what the markers mean. This 'social indifference' may be harmless if the other group does not experience any prejudice or bigotry, but it is problematic if the result is that prejudice is being ignored or is invisible to the dominant social group. (This of course can also happen in situations where it is the Protestant-born or Scots-born who are the minority.)

One participant said, after some thought, "*I think I am aware of people telling me about things that I haven't personally experienced*" (Woman, Interview 5, Dundee). She could not however remember what they were.

- 4.22 Claims about such ignorance of the meaning of these markers are sometimes met with disbelief by Scots with more experience of troubled histories, where markers of faith such as saying either 'chapel' (Catholic) or 'church' (Protestant) are acutely detected. Attending some football games with a parent also exposes people to sectarian terminology that has become '*part of the lexicon of Scottish football*', as one focus group member described it. So,



to some Scots who are very familiar with what these subtle markers mean, it seems implausible that there are others who are unaware.

- 4.23 But the invisibility of these markers to some participants appeared to be a genuine phenomenon. In such social spaces, people from a minority religious background who attended a non-denominational school, for instance, may be well-used to successfully 'passing' and may lead quite different lives from those for whom their religious affiliation is more overt. Hence, social indifference may hide a problem, or suggest that there is no problem. It is not easy to work out which.

### The 'silent topic'

- 4.24 An example of this 'discursive deficit', where sectarianism is rarely spoken about, is clear in this quote from an interviewee living on a social housing estate in the North Lanarkshire case study. As part of a wider discussion about sectarianism and crime, he spoke about local crime in his area but could not think of any sectarian incidents that had happened, nor that he had heard about:

*Interviewer: What about your family and friends? Do you think they have ever experienced sectarianism? Have they ever spoke to you about it or mentioned any incidents?*

*Participant: Not directly no, I have not, I have not, but it is one of those topics that obviously you don't discuss, it is just something that is not really discussed unless it is on the news, and then you will have a discussion while you eat your dinner. But it is not something that is really discussed. (Man, Interview 2, N Lanarkshire)*

- 4.25 When asked if it affects his town, he said:

*Oh aye, I would say it does. It certainly affects it the same way you have got ... I suppose it can affect any sort of town. But not so much that it affects things at the surface of that, if that makes sense.*

*... You know it exists, it is just not something that is brought to the surface, but you know if you go to certain pubs or certain company ... But it is usually said in a pub environment, you won't usually hear people chatting about it in the bloody Starbucks or elsewhere or whatever ... It is certainly evident in places, but it is more like the silent topic is probably a good way to describe it in certain aspects.*

- 4.26 Another participant described encountering abuse in the pub where she worked:

*They are predominantly Rangers supporters and then they found out I was a Catholic. 'Oh you f\*cking Catholic ...!' Well first of all they started like 'Oh hey honey how are you doing?' and all that, and they were getting chatting away. Then it got into the usual conversation, 'what team do you*

*support?’ And I made the biggest mistake in saying oops ... And they were like ‘Ohh you are f\*cking, you smelly Fenian!’ and that kind of stuff. But then in the next breath they said ‘aw we are only joking’ and stuff like that. ‘Oh what are you doing the night?’ And that sort of, but, they were arseholes, basically. (Woman, Interview 3, N Lanarkshire)*

- 4.27 As often seemed to be the case in the stories we were told, the woman in the second quote above did not appear to have discussed the incident with anyone before telling us about it: she had no complete story to tell and did not remember how the incident had ended. Asked by the interviewer ‘*how did you feel?*’, she said ‘*I think I told them to “get to f\*ck!” or something. I would have definitely, I wouldn’t have stood and took it.*’

### **Media homogenisation**

- 4.28 One result of this discursive deficit may be a lack of interest in - even resistance to - taking ownership of the problem of sectarianism in one’s own community. When people do not talk to each other about their experiences, then sectarianism is always ‘over the water’ or ‘down the road’. This is a serious problem for initiatives tackling sectarianism that seek community support.
- 4.29 One contribution from an Edinburgh interviewee (who grew up in the Highlands) however casts a different light on this. She felt that discussing sectarianism as if it is present in the same way throughout Scotland is something that actively spreads ‘the poison’: she referred in particular to cultural output such as comedies that, by presenting scenarios in which people are behaving in sectarian ways, have the effect of teaching listeners to be sectarian. It is not that the humour is sectarian in the sense of being anti-Catholic or anti-Protestant, nor that it is showing approval of this. Rather, by unthinkingly presenting an image of Scotland in which it seems normal that Scots are sectarian, the humour is actively extending the territory within Scotland in which sectarianism is normal.
- 4.30 She was critical not only of casual media representation of sectarianism in Scotland, but even some purportedly anti-sectarian representations. She felt that young people were learning to identify sectarianism as a Scottish problem because of media representations rather than transmission through their own community. Recognising themselves as Scottish, they then perversely identified sectarian distinctions (such as green or blue clothes) as something to adopt, being part of the national character.
- 4.31 She made her point through a discussion of BBC Scotland:

*It shouldnae be called the BBC Scotland, it should be called BBC Glasgow - just the centre of Glasgow and just the mouthy people - because they don’t know that everybody disnae have Catholic and Protestant problems ... it broadcasts to Shetland and Galloway but it assumes that attitudes, aspects and experiences in the centre of Glasgow are what everybody experiences and by talking about it or referring to it*

*often in comic cuts or in not necessarily always in news reports and things, in all sorts of other ways and it just seeps into the fabric and things that you hear in the BBC because you do imagine it still comes with a bit of authority and correctness. So I do believe that our media, almost all centred in Glasgow, a few in Edinburgh, are making this worse, not just by the way that they when they're conscious that they're reporting it, but when they're just talking about it in general so it's in other contexts. It spreads. They're not conscious they're spreading it but people are hearing it and they think 'oh that must be right'.*

- 4.32 She then spoke to the interviewer about how hard it is to estimate how prevalent sectarianism is, or is not:

*In day to day life it doesn't touch me but I am sure it is for a good number of people in Edinburgh, I wouldn't know what percentage ... It's like dye in water, it just sort of spreads and it's no' countable. (Woman, Interview 2, Edinburgh)*

- 4.33 The dominant narrative about sectarianism is about its unique Scottishness, but most societies have some inter-religious conflict, as can be seen in the academic literature on Catholic and Protestant conflicts in several Western nations. It is not the task of this report to estimate how much or how little sectarianism there is in Scotland, and whether this is unusual or not. (An estimate of prevalence is available in Hinchliffe (2015)). What this chapter illustrates instead is how unused some Scots are to talking about 'sectarianism' in everyday life – even when it is their own experience.

## **5. ETHNICITY AND OTHER IDENTITIES BEYOND THE RELIGIOUS**

- 5.1 Something that often comes up in academic discussions about sectarianism is the ways in which people assume that one identity is tied to another. We will discuss this in the context of football later, but it is worth mentioning here that none of our participants expressed any assumptions linking Catholicism or Protestantism to any identities beyond Irish and British. We did not come across anyone who linked Catholicism or Protestantism to other ethnic groups (for instance people of Polish or Italian ancestry).
- 5.2 One participant in the North Lanarkshire case study said that, in her view, Polish people suffered from negative stereotypes. She had previously mentioned several examples of anti-Catholic abuse towards indigenous Scots, so the interviewer asked her if she thought that the animosity towards Polish people had anything to do with Poland being a mainly Catholic country. She replied: *'I couldn't tell you, I didn't know that Polish people were mainly Catholic.'* (Woman, Interview 1, N Lanarkshire)
- 5.3 Multicultural values and immigration were sometimes raised by participants in focus groups when exploring how sectarianism might be manifested in the community. Positive stories were told, but also problems were discussed,

such as the social distancing of indigenous Scots from migrants through their use of languages other than English at social events and in local shops, and perceptions of unequal distribution of benefits, unequal allocation of housing in favour of recently-arrived migrants, and so on.

- 5.4 What is important about these particular stories is that discussion of religious identity quickly shifted to discussions of ethnic and racial identity and so participants tended to speak about these as part and parcel of the same issue. Many participants seemed more fluent on these topics, whether they were making supportive comments about other ethnic groups or criticising them. This would suggest that the argument made in the 1980s, that experiences of racist exclusion were displaced by the significance of divisions between Catholics and Protestants in Scotland (Miles and Dunlop 1987, cited in Hopkins and Smith 2008), has been overturned. Some of our participants focused more on differences between ethnic groups rather than on sectarianism (there can be a racist element in sectarianism, such as anti-Irish prejudice, but our participants here were speaking about other ethnic groups).
- 5.5 This is not to say that there was more or less racism or sectarianism in the 1980s compared to the present day, and nor is it to suggest that those who are racist are also sectarian (although this may be the case for some people); instead, the point here is that the views of our participants suggest they have a heightened awareness of issues of race, and an openness to discussing such issues, compared to the 1980s in Scotland when such matters tended to be eclipsed by concerns about sectarian divisions.
- 5.6 Social class is relevant here too. One of our elderly Polish interviewees spoke about her experience of Irish-born Catholic families arriving in Scotland at the same time as hers did. The Irish families, she said, had arrived (in both Glasgow and Edinburgh) as very poor, and were uneasy about socialising. In contrast, the Polish families had arrived with much greater personal wealth and social capital, and had become part of the Scottish Catholic community much more easily.
- 5.7 Irishness however was usually treated differently. Our Polish participant above was unusual in treating the Irish as a migrant group. Mostly, our participants who did not have an Irish heritage spoke about Ireland and Irishness in the light of religious or political contexts. A Glasgow participant who originated from Fife commented specifically on this:

*You don't ask a Polish person, 'what religion are you again?' You know, despite the fact there is a 90% chance they will be Catholic. You don't ask a Spaniard when you are in the boozer, 'what school did you go to?' You know? Do you? It is only Irish people that get treated like that. So it is all tied up with the sectarian elements of people's predeterminations of what you should, what you are. Whether or not you are west Belfast or east Belfast or ... Derry or Londonderry or that, you know? So there is a ... there is no doubt in my mind that Irish people get treated absolutely appallingly. (Man, interview 6, Glasgow)*

- 5.8 There were several examples where participants assumed that anti-Irish prejudice was something different from racism. For instance, a Glasgow participant who described himself as Scots Irish said:

*'just because of the history and geography of where we are it happens to be ... eh ... you know, the Irish conflict ... eh ... it could just as easily be, you know, if we happened to be in New Orleans it could be a racial conflict.'* (Man, interview 7, Glasgow)

- 5.9 Others expressed puzzlement about displays of Irish nationalism because they felt that the people expressing Irish identity were in fact Scots. For instance, in one focus group where participants raised this topic, a woman said about her Celtic-supporting relative:

*He is actually born to Scottish parents, but was born in England. Raised in England until he was about 17, and then he came back to Scotland. And then went back to England and now lives in England again. And he considers himself Irish. I do not know why and it is ridiculous. He is ... he boggles my brain, he really does.* (Woman, Focus Group 1, Glasgow)

- 5.10 Another, talking about Orange parades, observed that this applied to Protestant Irishness too:

*... I think probably we will never be able to do it right. ... You know, because, it's really funny but if you look at the Ulster Scots narrative and to an extent, it is quite dominant within, well not dominant, but it's being told to stay within Northern Ireland.* (Man, Interview 5, Glasgow)

- 5.11 Some participants seemed to be arguing therefore that people of Irish origin are expected to relinquish an Irish identity and adopt a Scottish identity. If so, this limits the choice of identity for people who have Irish origins. It makes them 'contingent insiders' (Back 1996). This would however be different from forms of racism in which certain groups are never permitted to acquire the default identity. (A familiar example is 'African-Americans', who are rarely referred to in popular discourse as simply 'Americans', despite hundreds of years of American ancestry, regardless of which individuals want to have both identities and which individuals do not.)

## **6. WHERE SECTARIANISM HAPPENS**

- 6.1 In this report, we want to focus on a deeper understanding of sectarianism's variations and historical and local community contexts, rather than large-scale geographic distinctions. Media debate about sectarianism often focuses on supposed personality characteristics, good and bad, of people from specific parts of Scotland. But much of a community's history of problems with, or freedom from, sectarianism has to do with quite separate factors of history and environment.

- 6.2 The results are not easily predictable. For instance, our Western Isles participants sometimes pointed to the closeness and long history of the communities as a possible reason that sectarianism was not a larger problem than it was, despite strongly Catholic and Protestant communities living side by side. In contrast, an Edinburgh participant observed that he had worked in parts of the Borders where parts of some towns had long-established, stable communities – but rather than acting as a buffer against bigotry, these had created the conditions for prejudiced beliefs to be transmitted through the areas and take hold.
- 6.3 With this in mind, it is useful to consider what participants had to say about where identifiable incidents happen.

### **Location and timing**

- 6.4 The locating of sectarianism was a highly contested issue across the focus groups and interviews. For those living outside of Glasgow, there was general agreement that sectarianism was a problem of ‘the West of Scotland’. However, in the Glasgow case study, some participants claimed that sectarianism was more prevalent in the surrounding areas than it was in the city of Glasgow itself. Furthermore, some of our participants who lived in more isolated communities felt that it would be easier to exclude people based on religious affiliation given the close-knit nature of the community; they argued that this would be more difficult in a large city like Glasgow where people were less familiar with each other.
- 6.5 Although participants tended to locate sectarianism as an issue for west-central Scotland, those who had experienced sectarianism did so in a wide range of different places and times, including when visiting Glasgow if they did not live there, but importantly, also in their own neighbourhoods, or in nearby communities. From the focus groups and interview data, it appeared that community experiences of sectarianism were more intense in west-central Scotland than in the other communities we visited, but stories were told about sectarianism in all of the communities.
- 6.6 There were specific places and times that our participants flagged up as increasing the likelihood of them experiencing sectarianism. The days on which football matches happened (particularly involving Celtic and Rangers but also sometimes relating to other teams such as Hibs and Hearts) were mentioned frequently. Specifically, some participants referred to being cautious about visiting - or even walking by - specific pubs on these days. Some said they avoided routes to football grounds and to town centres, particularly in the evenings after a game. Some stayed in their homes, or, more rarely, left the neighbourhood completely.
- 6.7 Some mentioned being careful on public transport due to what they felt was the increased likelihood of them getting caught up on some form of sectarianism. Indeed, public transport was mentioned by a number of participants, both in relation to football matches but also more generally, both in the past and still today:

*And you'd be in trains where there was inappropriate language being used. (Woman, Interview 1, Western Isles)*

*Ibrox and Celtic Park, they are the Coliseum of sectarianism. That is where the battles are played out. And I would describe getting the bus to Glasgow like the chariot in Ben Hur. You know, it erupts. It erupts and that's where I find myself hearing it. And half the time it might be somebody who is completely drunk saying something or having a wee rammy with somebody or it can just be people randomly expressing that ignorance. (Man, Interview 5, Glasgow)*

- 6.8 Several stories were told during one of the Glasgow focus groups of incidents with taxi drivers refusing customers service due to their perceived or admitted religious background, or in one instance a customer refusing to enter a taxi due to the perceived religion of the taxi driver himself.
- 6.9 As well as being careful about visiting pubs and using public transport on match days, participants also discussed being careful about wearing specific colours on these days in order to minimise the chance of them running into trouble.

*Certainly through my partner's family, so he is from just outside Glasgow, again kind of leafy suburbs, but his kind of main focus point was Glasgow. They're from a Church of Scotland family, they're Rangers supporters, and the stories that he would tell about going into Glasgow and having to be like having to be really careful about what he'd wear and not going into the wrong pubs, always having coins in his pockets to throw at people in case like trouble started and those sorts of stories kind of really made me eh yeah, it kind of opened my eyes a little bit because I think it's like growing up in England, you don't really, well, and also having gone to the school that I went to, I didn't really think about religious differences as that big an issue. (Man, Interview 4, Edinburgh)*

- 6.10 Aside from match days, participants referred to a range of places and times when they had experienced sectarianism, or when friends and family members have encountered it. Some were cautious about how much personal information they revealed about themselves to others they met because they were concerned about being judged and associated with having a particular religious affiliation. Here, participants were sensitive about revealing their surname, their educational background and their family history.
- 6.11 Concerns were raised by a small minority of the participants about experiences of sectarianism in recruitment practices – such as during interviews when the interview panel have access to their CV and knowledge of their surname and educational background – as well as with regards to their general treatment in the workplace and their access to promotion opportunities. There were few accounts of this being personally experienced by participants but this was still expressed as a concern by some.

- 6.12 Alcohol was also mentioned by many participants when asked what cultural aspects of Scottish society helped contribute towards sectarianism. Aggressive behaviour in environments that might otherwise remain enclosed could spill out into more public places. One participant, when asked whether she had herself seen any violence that she would put down to sectarianism, said that a street near her home had been closed off due to violence between rival groups drinking in two separate pubs at either end of the street.
- 6.13 Social media, online environments, and email presented another set of locations where participants recalled experiences of sectarianism. One participant in Edinburgh recalled a particularly nasty experience of sectarianism over email but for most, their experiences were not personally directed at them but were visible to them through the complex layers of information and comments posted on social media. These experiences or encounters varied in nature and intensity but many resulted in some sense of discomfort for the participants. This has similarities with Noble's (2005: 110) discussion of racism where he mentions that 'this might include name-calling, sometimes said aggressively, sometimes not, jokes in bad taste, bad manners, provocative and offensive gestures or even just a sense of social distance or unfriendliness or an excessive focus on someone's ethnicity [or religious affiliation]'.

### **'Pockets'**

- 6.14 What was striking was not just where sectarianism happened, but where it did not. A distinctive word that participants often used to describe sectarianism (but not to describe other exclusions such as racism) was '*pockets*'.
- 6.15 Even in the most troubled areas, this came up. Rather than just meaning a fixed geographical place, however, it seemed to be a synonym for something more extreme than the places or people around it.

Sometimes this meant particular people associated with a specific geographical place:

*Quite a lot of supporters live outside and travel through, drink in those pubs and then travel to the match ... So we see the pockets of it when they come in to our area. (Man, Interview 3, Edinburgh)*

Or a particular workplace:

*Discrimination, yeah, in very, very isolated pockets. I know some companies, I know one in particular who wouldn't give a job to a Catholic. And it's just like, it is daft. It is really daft. And it is that caveman mentality. (Man, Interview 6, Glasgow)*

But it also could be flash incidents:

*if you ever see a violent scene ... Fortunately enough the stewards were brilliant and they literally dragged these guys off the terracing at a rate of*



*knots ... but the thing could have spilt over and I'm thinking that was vile and, you know, it was a pocket but quite vicious, you know. (Focus Group 1, N Lanarkshire)*

And sometimes it referred to an outdated mindset:

*But that doesn't mean to say that there isn't, that there is no problems at all. There are still pockets of it, you have to be honest, admit there are pockets of it. There are pockets of it where it goes back to the Reformation ... And that is still lingering, yeah there are pockets of that still lingering. (Focus Group 1, Western Isles)*

- 6.16 It is these distinctive elements that perhaps create so much difficulty for attempts to estimate the prevalence and nature of sectarianism in Scotland. As we saw in the two chapters on the 'discursive deficit' and 'where sectarianism happens', in public and in private, there are a great many spaces where sectarianism does not exist or is not expressed.

### **Gender spaces**

- 6.17 One element that came out strongly is how much of the public display of sectarianism is divided by gender. Sectarianism in Scotland has been argued to be a masculine problem (Deuchar 2009; Deuchar & Holligan 2008; and Murray 2000). The examples of sectarian behaviour discussed by our participants were usually masculine behaviours directed by men at both men and women.

*I think there is a big thing, especially in kind of male circles in Glasgow, where the banter does kind of skirt that line and there is kind of racist slurs and sectarian ones as well which aren't extensively kind of meant in a hurtful way but, kind of, the language that you would associate as being harmful and painful is kind of dressed up as a bit of fun. (Woman, Interview 2, Glasgow)*

- 6.18 The following examples emphasise how ingrained this can become:

*I think it's more family. If you've got like family members that are involved like, well, hooliganism for example, that runs in families. If your grandad's done it, your dad's done it, there's a high chance that you're gonna do it. It's probably the same with sectarianism as well, it's down to the way you're brought up. (Man, interview 7, Edinburgh)*

*Cos your dad tells you you're a Rangers fan but he also tells you that along with that you're a Protestant, but he fails to mention what a Protestant is or what they believe in, although you'll kind of know what they believe in because he'll kind of, you know do certain things that fit in, but you don't really know but you know your dad's a Protestant and a Rangers fan and he's told you you are, so you can do that too. And then when you get older you mix with people who have had similar sort of experiences, but some might know exactly what it is that they represent,*

*and some people might you know, know nothing, and I suppose that's where it, that's why I think it comes from, it comes from a kind of misunderstanding of, you know, what's going on. (Man, interview 5, Edinburgh)*

- 6.19 Women's roles within community experiences of sectarianism were not seen as wholly passive. They did not though feature as heavily within the more violent and aggressive forms of sectarianism that were cited. They take evasive action to avoid the risk of conflict, they develop strategies to protect their families (Goodall and Malloch 2013), and like men they are vulnerable in public spaces such as the school and the workplace. However they too can transmit prejudices and they have an established role in some public events, including ones seen by many of our participants as a cause of trouble. Nevertheless, our participants repeatedly blamed men.
- 6.20 They also criticised certain masculine cultures. Football, marching, music and parades were often said to create unnecessarily aggressive and intimidating (masculine) environments. This shapes communities and can infiltrate other spaces, notably public transport and main retail streets on the days around major events, but also the home. One of the men who took part said:

*This isn't just about class, it's definitely about gender because let's face it, the people that suffer most from the fall-out of sectarianism are women ... the whole thing about sectarianism is about the families and it's about communities.*

*I think it's like any kinda, when you talk about sectarianism there's people out there playing a war out in their minds and sometimes in their homes, and women and children are always the collateral. You know, for me ... How many children have been physically and mentally abused and suffered? Because ... how many have got a slap from their dad? How many, for disagreeing, or not being man enough, or you know?*

- 6.21 Nearly all of the recollections about sectarian jokes and banter were about men engaging in such behaviour with other men, and pubs and drinking culture were often the context in which such actions were experienced or overheard. It came over strongly that the use of humour and banter about sectarianism is overlaid with masculine attributes and qualities.
- 6.22 As some of our participants noted, this may simply be minor humour between close friends; however, the combination with alcohol may easily result in jokes and banter spilling over to alienate others. Worse still, as our participants explained, this may then become aggressive and violent, resulting in the exclusion of those men and women who are in the minority or those who are mistaken for having a particular affiliation.

### **Personal experiences of endemic sectarianism**

- 6.23 We did come across a small number of participants who spoke of constant sectarian abuse in their everyday lives. One was a Catholic woman working in a Rangers-affiliated bar. She said that she encountered sectarian behaviour

often, that it had led to violence in her Glasgow pub in the past and that she was confident it would again. She observed that it was not unusual for her regular customers to refer to her using highly offensive sectarian language ('dirty Fenian bastard'), but was insistent that it did not bother her.

Interviewer: *How common is it, sectarian language in your pub?*

Participant: *Quite common.*

Interviewer: *Quite like daily?*

Participant: *You'll hear it at least once a day.*

Interviewer: *You'll hear sectarian language once a day?*

Participant: *Aye, aye.*

Interviewer: *Even though there's no Rangers game on?*

Participant: *There could be something on the news about the Pope and that's it, it starts them off or.*

Interviewer: *Is it some ... do they need a trigger?*

Participant: *Naw.*

- 6.24 The night before Celtic and Rangers games in the city, however, she would normally be unable to sleep, worried about the next day and what it might bring. Religion, she said, generally did not play a role in her life. Catholicism meant little to her identity and only became an issue when she went to work.

## **7. GENERATIONS**

- 7.1 If there are many places and times where sectarianism is not expressed or spoken about, how is it passed on? An important element that was mentioned frequently to us was the relationships between younger and older people (Hopkins et al 2011, Vanderbeck and Worth 2015). It is in the values, practices and social learning that are passed on where we can locate sectarianism. We examined the pressures within generations as well as the 'vertical pull of inheritance', from older to younger generations (Brannen 2012: 270 and Brannen et al 2011: 155).
- 7.2 Our analysis highlights some stories of continuity, against a backdrop of generational differences and contemporary social change. These transitions are an inheritance of culture (Richardson 2014; Brannen et al 2011). Here, we are looking at the transmission of values and characteristics of a previous generation, which can be acquired in different ways. At different times they can be learned, taught or tacit.

## Generational differences or an inheritance of culture?

*I think, like to your older people, they find [religion] quite important. Like they are still really like, but again it is not really religion, it is not religion at all. It is just like mainly a Celtic and Rangers thing. ... Like you see somebody who is a total diehard Rangers or Celtic fan, and they are all like oh pro-Catholic or pro-Protestant blah blah blah. And you are like 'No, [do you] actually go to church? Do you even ...? Did you go to church on a Sunday?' And they are like 'No'. And then why are you so being so extreme about it? (Woman, Interview 1, N Lanarkshire)*

- 7.3 This participant, although presenting this as mainly a problem of older generations, added:

*It comes down to the younger ones a wee bit, though. See like ... definitely through them. Because there was a girl in my school, same age as me obviously ... and she is so cool, Orange walks, all the Orange walks. She will take her wee boy too, her wee boy is like only five, but he knows the difference between it all. And she is like 'aw ... Johnny was so funny today! He was like "Naw ma, that green top, that is pure Celtic!" and all that kind of stuff. And it is just wee things like that, and she is obviously putting it down onto her son, and she is like proud of it, she thinks it is quite funny ...*

- 7.4 Another participant pointed to the role of intergenerational relations and the pervasiveness of sectarianism:

*Participant: I suppose ... well ... I mean my general opinion on beliefs is they usually start from either an inability to understand something, or a lack of knowledge, so, you know your sectarian beliefs are gonna be passed down through the generations without almost a reason.*

*Interviewer: Em ... and when you said like families pass it down is that, do you think that's kind of where it comes from?*

*Participant: Yeah definitely.*

*Interviewer: Or is it peer, is it peer influence?*

*Participant: Peer influence as well but the source is family. (Man, Interview 5, Edinburgh)*

- 7.5 Generational differences are ever-present however and act as forces of social change. The differences between generations are shaped by socio-economic pressures such as social mobility, multiculturalism, and the declining influence of institutional religion.
- 7.6 Religion is not only affected by wider social changes but is integral to them. Some of the comments made by our participants suggested a problem that has been called the 'intergenerational contract' (Vanderbeck and Worth 2015:

1). This refers to the tensions and sense of injustice between generations. Societies are changing rapidly, in this case through processes of secularisation, but in close-knit communities, sectarian sentiment can transfer down.

*Well like, well as I say, growing up with friends that are Catholic they often cited eh, they often told me about their grandads who got forced out of where they lived and by Protestants and got like bottled or something by some Protestants and they would direct this against me, so I felt like a lot of this angst was kind of eh inherited and ehm yeah but baggage that they'd been brought down and been told by their dad and their grandad.* (Man, interview 3, Glasgow)

7.7 Raphael Samuels (1994), a British historian, has observed that memory 'is stamped with the ruling passions of the time'. We shape and reshape the past, selectively remembering or forgetting our memories. But this works in both directions: communities are also shaped by 'post-memories' (Hirsch 2012). These are the lived experiences of events that happened before our birth; in other words, the ways in which we embody memories of past histories and narratives, and how these interfere with and shape our daily lives.

7.8 A few of our participants contrasted youth to older, generational experiences:

*So if you are doing something deliberately to provoke a reaction on the basis of what their religion is, knowing that, if you do something knowing that it will offend them, that for me is sectarianism ... Which is slightly different from I suppose casual or non-conscious sectarianism, which ... I will accuse maybe a lot of older folk of. I wouldn't say older folk are ignorant, I would say that they have been brought up in a different time and generation and things that were acceptable to them, are no longer acceptable now. So I wouldn't say they are out-and-out bigots. So ... if I said to my granny, 'Look granny, I am ... I am marrying a Muslim' or something, she would say, 'That is fine, just make sure it's in a Catholic church.'* (Man, interview 6, Glasgow)

7.9 This 'casual' (tacit) and 'non-conscious' sectarianism contrasts with the 'bitter' sectarianism that was often cited by participants as inherited by some young people. It is this casual sectarianism, challenged through a lens of political consciousness, which younger people seemed able to resist. Positively, much of this was linked to what was being claimed as multicultural influences in Scotland.

7.10 It is worth noting that often in interviews, more virulent and less casual sectarianism was described as being *bitter*. This term was used by several participants to separate those who use sectarian terminology as part of a more jovial 'banter' from those who are more likely to harbour a deep-seated dislike of others because of their religion.

7.11 Several participants focused on education, in particular of younger people, in tackling sectarianism:

*Because if you want to stamp something out, you have to focus on the newest generation. Kind of try and train them not to, to not be like that. (Woman, Interview 3, N Lanarkshire)*

Participant: *I think you know it's young people that write my generation off. We have come a long way but it's not going to go much further unless everybody still does have that individual opportunity to change. But let's focus on young people who are coming up. (Man, Interview 5, N Lanarkshire)*

While pointing to tensions between generations, the second participant argued that facilitating tolerance and openness are essential to achieving community progress.

### **The role of the family**

- 7.12 The role of the family was mentioned by many participants. Previous work with gangs and marginalised youth in Scotland (Deuchar 2009: 84) has found that:

‘Family was a big influence in terms of instilling sectarian values in many of the youngsters I talked to (confirming findings from Northern Ireland by Kelly 2002; Sinclair et al 2004). They talked about the way in which their fathers or older brothers had encouraged them to support the same football team as they did and had taught them the words of sectarian songs’ (Deuchar 2009: 84).

- 7.13 In Deuchar’s work, despite these young men (almost exclusively) knowing the words to sectarian songs through family traditions associated with football, they were mostly apathetic toward religion itself. The cultural association is more nuanced:

‘There is even less doubt about the continuing importance of cultural associations with Christianity at the “Celtic fringes” of the UK, where Christian affiliation remains important as an identity marker for those outside the dominant, English-centred national discourse (even when this is couched in terms of “Britishness”). In Scotland, where the state church<sup>9</sup> is Presbyterian and many Roman Catholics trace their ancestry to Irish immigrants, identities reflect religious, cultural and nationalistic legacies, and religious language is still important in a “sectarianism” which is manifest in various ways, not least in the behaviour and chants of supporters of Rangers (Protestant) and Celtic (Catholic) football clubs’ (Guest, Olson and Wolffe 2012: 66 citing Bruce et al 2004 and Devine 2000).

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<sup>9</sup> The constitutional position of the Church of Scotland is unusual. It is the national church in Scotland, “representative of the Christian Faith of the Scottish people” under the Church of Scotland Act 1921, and is named in the Acts and Treaty of Union, but excepting its formal link with the monarch, it does not today have the constitutional role that the Church of England does.

- 7.14 A generational perspective can highlight in what ways sectarianism can become embodied in everyday life. Although a great many of our participants suggested that football is integral to understanding sectarianism in Scotland, football is not the extent of the issue. There are multiple sources and foci involved. Our participants spoke about sectarianism within community spaces and from individuals who had no prior connections to football. Narratives self-perpetuate as stories of 'football, sectarianism and Glasgow', and are recycled, several participants said, in the media. We look further at football in chapter 11.

## 8. MEMORY AND THE PERMEABILITY OF TIME

*'The past is never dead. It's not even past.'*<sup>10</sup>

- 8.1 Both personal memory and historical context came up regularly in the interviews and focus groups. When asked what made something sectarian, participants often referred not just to the intention of the perpetrator (as is usually the case when laypeople conceptualise racism) but also to the context. Often, this was historical or an old personal memory.
- 8.2 An important location where sectarian experiences occur is in schools. It may seem that because some people's only stories about sectarianism were schoolday stories, this means that the problem has declined over time. This may well be so. However another possible explanation is that schools are places where (a) people who would not normally mix are forced together, whether they come from different social backgrounds or simply do not like each other and (b) people are marked out by a uniform or other such symbol.
- 8.3 Nonetheless, some participants described a very different, harsher history. One participant described Glasgow as a 'divided city' that you could 'cut in two' when she was growing up during the 1970s. She likened the situation to that in Northern Ireland, where groups were socially segregated:

*It was bad. Really bad. It was something like your Northern Ireland situation really. You didn't play with Catholic weans and you didn't really talk to them. That is a lot more milder now ... There used to be gang fights and everything back then. You don't want to experience that divide, you know? (Focus Group 1, Glasgow).*

She continued, saying:

*... We kept to our own wee community, if you know what I mean? And as I say I cannae really remember ... who the other Catholic schools were. But, once you found out they were Catholic, you didn't talk to them again. That's how deep religious it was back then. You see this carry on in Northern Ireland where they walk one side down the street, or they are not*

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<sup>10</sup> Faulkner (1951: 80).

*allowed to walk down some streets something like that. That is the way it used to be near enough here as well. (Focus Group 1, Glasgow).*

- 8.4 Another participant spoke of his grandmother forbidding his father from joining the Scouts because their town did not have a Catholic troop. His grandmother, an Irish Catholic, disapproved of the oath scouts were required to swear to the Queen and the use of the Union Flag, so his father was not permitted to join.

*I said to my dad ... did you go in the Scouts? 'No, no, I really wanted to join.' And I said, 'Well why didn't you join?' And he was like, 'Well, your granny wouldn't let me, because there wasn't a Catholic troop in Greenock', where he grew up ... And I thought, 'a Catholic Scout troop, how, what? What the f\*ck would you need a Catholic scout troop for?' And I think they had different variations on some of the terms, you weren't exposed to the Queen stuff so much and the Union Flags on the wall and all that. So my dad said to me, 'No it is bonkers but that is the way it was, you know.' But at the same point, my granny was perfectly happy for all my uncles and my dad, to go down to the park after the Orange parade and collect lemonade bottles so they could take them back to the shop for money after the parade. So ... I don't know if I would call her like, yeah, I would call her a hypocrite, I suppose. (Man, Interview 7, Glasgow).*

- 8.5 Childhood stories are often dismissed as belonging to a superseded past, but as Leonard (2006) has pointed out, 'children have greater problems in having their stories heard compared to adults'. People who have memories of sectarianism 'may have to wait until they reach adulthood before their voices are heard and their memories listened to'.

### **'Thatcherism' and Scottish identity**

- 8.6 The move towards neo-liberal politics, which Scots in particular have identified with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, was mentioned several times by interviewees. In three of the interviews, the participants became impassioned, using harsher or more insulting language than they used elsewhere in the interview, and they personified negative trends in Scottish life by reference to the government that Mrs Thatcher managed. They argued that this had created a deep social dislocation that created a door through which sectarian abuses could travel. (In contrast, the current Conservative government was only mentioned by one participant.)
- 8.7 An intriguing and contrasting argument was put forward by another participant. He argued that Thatcherism and clubbing culture were two factors that worked to erode some (but not all) of Scottish sectarianism. Because the Thatcher government was seen to target Scotland, this brought Scots together as a minority and so displaced sectarian divisions; at the same time clubbing culture and ecstasy use (which brought young people into clubs in city centres and away from their neighbourhood and sectarian-based pubs) also worked to erode this.



- 8.8 The only other frequent mention of political allegiances was regarding the recent referendum on Scottish independence. A few participants took the view that the referendum had inflamed the issue and, as a result, sectarianism had mutated during the course of the campaign. Polarisation between British-Protestant Scots and Irish-Catholic Scots had been coloured by new alliances for and against Scottish independence. Most of these participants thought that this was short-lived, although a couple feared it would persist.<sup>11</sup>

### Exceptional events

- 8.9 Sociologist Steve Bruce and others<sup>12</sup> have pointed to the exceptional ('exotic') nature of severe sectarian incidents and have been critical of those who treat them as the norm. There is some force in this argument but it ignores the context in which people experience such events. It also minimises the presence of the tacit sectarianism we mentioned above. An interesting feature of the Western Isles fieldwork was that participants did not always describe the islands as free of sectarianism, although most did not regard it as a deep-seated problem, but they did speak about personal experiences very differently from most other participants.
- 8.10 Participants in the other case study sites who related stories that they regarded as serious tended to do so at a late point in the interview, often with much hesitation and rushing through the key details – and what was particularly striking was that in some cases the person did not even recall the incident until well into the interview. We describe in chapter 15 a story from a woman who had suffered an incident of workplace prejudice so upsetting that she resigned from her senior post shortly after: it would be reasonable to regard this as a life-changing incident.
- 8.11 Yet throughout the interview she had asserted that despite being devoutly and openly Catholic, she had suffered very few and mostly minor incidents. Only after about an hour did she suddenly recall the incident and became quite upset as she began to remember it and then to recount it to the interviewer. Many years it seemed had passed since she had last thought about it. To consider this incident merely as 'exotic' is to discount what appears to be a lack of social support in some communities to discuss such experiences, making the incidents' impact more severe than they might otherwise be, and also leading the victim to suppress or reclassify the memories of what took place.
- 8.12 The Western Isles participants in contrast tended to speak in a relaxed way about both their views about sectarianism and any personal experiences. This may be related to the long relationships among individuals in those communities that are part of the everyday life of the islands. It may also be connected with the exceptionally deep and frequent interaction between practising Catholics and Protestants in many parts of the Western Isles. Group religious observance remains an important part of island life and the

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<sup>11</sup> In contrast to this perception about religious/political linkages, see Rosie (2014).

<sup>12</sup> See for instance Bruce et al (2004: 3).

two denominations are closely involved in each other's worship, not just in secular spaces. We were told a variety of stories about ministers and priests visiting local people of the other denomination and welcoming them to services when for instance a Catholic married a Protestant. Many spoke about attending each other's services for important community occasions.<sup>13</sup>

- 8.13 Sectarianism in the Western Isles (where it appears) has a distinctive and older history related to local Scottish Catholicism and relatively little Irish Catholic inward migration. This was mentioned by two of the interviewees in the context of a question about anti-Irish racism. It may not be possible to apply lessons from the Western Isles to tackle sectarianism more generally, because the features of the island communities are so distinctive, but it is valuable as an example of resolving religious differences when the two denominations live so closely together.

The Western Isles experience is also an interesting counterpoint to the common argument that with cosmopolitanism or secularism comes tolerance.

## 9. JOKES AND BANTER

- 9.1 Many participants emphasised that the context of potentially sectarian speech is as important as the textual meaning. Much of the phenomenon of sectarianism in everyday Scottish culture is located in the context of talk, text and song.
- 9.2 In most of the interviews and focus groups we discussed jokes and banter. Kehily and Nayak (1997) have written about how humour is used to create and police hierarchies, and as a regulatory technique. The use of humour normalises issues and makes them acceptable to talk about. Sometimes this can be positive, because topics that are not spoken about are given some public consideration; on the other hand, when dealing with a problem that is as politically challenging as sectarianism, humour offers people additional space to engage in sectarian discourse while justifying it by saying 'oh it was only a joke'. This is the plausible deniability that many racism researchers have addressed.<sup>14</sup>
- 9.3 Not all of our participants talked about hearing or participating in jokes or banter relating to sectarianism but many had some experience of this either directly or through overhearing others engaging in such behaviour. Some participants felt somewhat distanced from sectarian humour and banter:

*... because I'm not kind of well aligned with either side or anything like that, I'm just not really involved in it, I just hear about it as banter from other people who are seemingly not involved in it so I don't know how*

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<sup>13</sup> This explanation fits well with the findings of the key meta-analytic test of over 500 studies by Pettigrew and Tropp (2006).

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. Liu and Mills (2006).

*diluted what I'm hearing is from what actually happens I imagine.*  
(Woman, interview 2, Glasgow)

- 9.4 Others rejected the significance of possibly sectarian humour because they saw it as being connected to football and/or drinking culture:

*Local football, not a problem. Dundee, Dundee United, same street, same time. And that is really not a problem. Again my other half is from the other side of the street, I don't know how we got married haha. But yeah, it is banter, you go to the pub before the game, you all go down the road together. It doesnae work out like we separate ourselves, you can walk down the road and go into the same pub and have a few beers. Walk down the road to the football grounds and then just go to different doors. And then when you come out you just meet up again. And it is banter, it is no' any ... it is nothing but banter.* (Woman, interview 3, Dundee)

- 9.5 A second group of participants tended to argue that engaging in the use of sectarian jokes and banter was acceptable at certain times in specific circumstances while also making it clear that there were places and times when it was completely unacceptable to participate in such behaviour. For these participants, the acceptability or not of using jokes and banter tended to depend on whether or not it was between friends, and whether it was said gently and in jest rather than aggressively or angrily. The context of sectarian speech is as important as the textual meaning.

- 9.6 One participant, for example, said that '*jokes and humour can be a way of informing and so on, but I think at times they can be quite nasty*' and another said '*well sometimes jokes and banter it's good, but sometimes they can be ... very hurtful and mean, you know.*' (Man, Interview 5, N Lanarkshire) The three participants below reflect on the use of humour: the first makes it clear that the use of aggression, for them, makes a joke more sectarian, and the second and third reflect on the difference between banter between friends compared to using humour with someone they have only recently met:

*Umm ... well I think ... I think like I was saying earlier the way that people how they mean it. You know if they were saying a joke, if they were meaning it aggressively then I say that would be more sectarian. But if I were to say a sectarian joke, but if I was saying it in a jokey way, I wouldn't see that as bad. But if I was shouting at someone or I was trying to hurt someone or annoy someone, I would see that as kind of more sectarian.* (Man, Interview 9, Western Isles)

*I am not sure because obviously I have got a few friends who are of different religions and different ethnic groups and that, but we have joked around and joked away and it all depends on how good friends you are with them. Because obviously they are saying the same to us and vice-versa but at the end of the day it is banter but ...* (Man, Interview 7, Western Isles)

*Ehm I think there is a fine line like, like I've never been, I've tried not to cross that line but obviously with friends and stuff it's different and you can have a lot more banter. I would never, I would never cross that line with someone I'd just met. (Man, Interview 7, Edinburgh)*

- 9.7 During a focus group in Edinburgh, one of the participants pointed out that if banter adopts a dictatorial tone – and therefore works to tell people how to live their lives – then this makes it more inappropriate to engage in. This was met with agreement by those in the group:

*When people are telling you how to live your life that's probably the point where I would say 'oh go and do whatever you want but I am not having anything to do with you'. If people are telling you how to live your life, that is no way to get on. In that case I think you should believe what you believe and don't change just because someone wants you to change. (Woman, Focus Group 1, Edinburgh)*

- 9.8 Some participants were eager to point out that jokes and banter could be particularly problematic when used on social media or online because of the multiple and complex ways that different people may interpret the tone and meaning of any comments:

*... a lot of a joke is about how you tell it, it's not what you say and so I struggle to see how online you could distinguish between a statement of fact and something that was supposed to be either ironic or sarcastic or you know. Because how else do you know, you can't put tone into you know a Facebook post or something or a tweet, whereas coming across in person it's very easy to tell whether somebody is joking or whether they're seriously making a statement that they believe in because I almost think that's kind of what jokes are all about. (Man, Interview 5, Edinburgh)*

- 9.9 In contrast to the participants we have quoted so far, a small proportion of those involved in the research adopted a firm line when it came to using humour in relation to sectarianism. One participant notes that '*I haven't experienced that myself, but I have been quite firm about not letting it happen at all.*' And, another participant argued that '*I think it's not a thing to put into jokes unless the joker is laughing at them both equally ...*' and then pointed out how difficult this would be:

*The fact of sectarianism, the fact of them getting all done up in their outfits and sashes and thinking that they were going to offend the ones at the other side, it would take a very clever comic to do that but anything that is done from one point of view is that is sectarian offensive and might be thought to deserve a slap in the face. (Woman, Interview 2, Edinburgh)*

- 9.10 Most of those who participated in the research felt that there was a point where jokes and banter became unacceptable; in other words, there comes a point when the '*line is crossed.*' For some participants the boundaries of acceptability were very flexible, however for others, '*there is a very fine line.*'

When asked where a line is crossed into sectarian humour, participants often focused on exclusion. Consider the views of these participants:

*You know, when humour is designed to be exclusive, then I have got a problem with it. And you can tell, you can tell when a joke is being inclusive and it's being exclusive. It's like somebody telling a dirty joke, it can be really dirty and really funny or it can be really misogynistic and you know the difference. And it is the same with anything that might be about religion. You can laugh at jokes about Ian Paisley or you can laugh at jokes about Pope John Paul, you know when they are being inclusive and when they are being exclusive. (Man, Interview 5, Glasgow)*

*Yeah, I have come across a fair bit of sort of, yeah, jokes and banter. And I suppose it is difficult to judge the impact of that, and where it becomes less funny. Because people do use it a lot, and then it becomes less funny when it reaches sort of another stage I suppose when there is a minority of people present, or if you think that the jokes and banter themselves are being used to sort of justify a particular way of being or a point of view. (Woman, Interview 1, Western Isles)*

- 9.11 Using humour as a means of regulation relates to discussions of hierarchy and power; this arose occasionally in the interviews, as we discuss in the chapter on sectarianism and the powerful.

## **10. SONG**

- 10.1 The sectarian or other meanings of song, like almost all cultural performances, depends to a great extent upon the context. The performance of the tune to *Rule Britannia* is likely to be understood quite differently by the audience at a Veterans' Association meeting than by a large crowd of Celtic football supporters on match day. Songs were often mentioned by our participants as having a particular power to construct sectarian meaning in a number of ways. Some songs were reported to have sectarian meaning through a literal reading of the lyrics but, just as often, a number of participants across the case studies reported that the context for performance itself was crucial to whether or not songs were perceived of as sectarian.
- 10.2 One participant in a Dundee focus group described how during a social trip to Northern Ireland, one of their group was verbally abused and threatened when they sang an Irish song. In Dundee this man had regularly sung Irish songs his mother had taught him as a young boy, whereas in Northern Ireland, these same songs were heard as a political statement of Republicanism and aggressively discouraged. This also supported our participant's view of sectarianism as a problem elsewhere:

*... the Catholics and the Protestants in Ireland and the West Coast, they've got meanings to the songs. They're just songs here. We just sing [emphasis added] (Woman, Focus Group 1, Dundee)*

- 10.3 In another example from the interviews, a participant identified the Tina Turner song 'Simply the Best' as a sectarian song, because of its widespread popularity with Rangers supporters and their occasional performances of it with actively offensive lyrics (or a meaningful pause that implies the words). Another participant reported that they perceived 'Rule Britannia' as a sectarian song because of its association with 'Protestants, Rangers, Unionists'.
- 10.4 This highlights the importance of the performance context to the construction of sectarian meaning. Songs that were acceptable to sing in Dundee at the social club were identified as sectarian and divisive in the Northern Irish context. Sectarianism in this context was activated not by the subject matter or style of the song but simply by the context in which it was sung. But often, songs can be used directly to express sectarian language, where both the context and the content of the songs are heard as sectarian.

Dundee was the only place in Scotland where a large migrant Irish community arrived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that was mostly women and mostly Catholic. Their arrival led to relatively little conflict (see Appendix 2). It may be that this throws some light on the social context today.

- 10.5 In another story from the Dundee focus group, the song *Kevin Barry* was identified as sectarian. It was banned at one social club, which upset some members of the club, but in this case the lyrics of the song, our participant said, carried the sectarian meaning because of its overt Irish republicanism:

*It was a bad ... my granny just wouldn't allow it in the house ... And yet she sung the Irish songs, because she was of Irish parents. But not that.*  
(Woman, Focus Group 1, Dundee)

- 10.6 In an example from Glasgow, the singer did not realise that her performance could even have been heard as sectarian because she was not aware of the sectarian meanings carried by the tune. In this case, a young woman was invited to a party in Glasgow from her home in Edinburgh, and as a result of her reputation as a fine singer was invited to contribute a song to the company. The song's lyrics carried no sectarian meanings but she was unaware that the tune that she was singing was also used for the song 'The Sash'. She was immediately stopped from singing within the first two lines of the performance and ushered quickly from the room. In her own words:

*That tune carries with it ... all the hatred and the ugliness and the, it's on purpose they try to upset other folk. I didn't [know], I thought it was a really good, it is a fabulous tune.* (Woman, Interview 2, Edinburgh).

- 10.7 The tune of 'The Sash' has publicly acquired the sectarian and divisive meanings of the lyrics, so that the tune carries the whole sectarian meaning of the song (even just the opening bars).<sup>15</sup> Thus, the tune can have powerful sectarian meaning without ever explicitly referring to religious identity and

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<sup>15</sup> See for instance a more detailed analysis of this phenomenon in McKerrell (2012).

without any text at all.<sup>16</sup> In the example quoted above, a tune without words was heard as highly offensive to certain listeners, despite being used for an entirely unrelated and non-sectarian song. In these sorts of cases, this is not just an interpretation imposed by individuals, but a meaning shared and understood across different social groups.

- 10.8 There was, across the case study sites, widespread acknowledgement that songs have a powerful ability to divide people. Certain songs such as 'The Sash', 'The Fields of Athenry', 'Simply the Best', 'The Famine Song', 'The Billy Boys', 'No Pope of Rome' and others, were all identified as sectarian. In one instance, a participant who worked in a pub reported that they had removed a CD of 'Irish songs' from the pub's jukebox in an attempt to minimise the potential for sectarian problems.
- 10.9 What is important in the analysis of sectarian songs, or other cultural performances such as stories, jokes, films and so on, is to identify which element(s) of the performance carry sectarian meaning and why. Clearly lyrics can carry significant sectarian meaning, but as our examples from this study show, there are particularly Scottish understandings of non-textual, musical elements that can construct sectarianism. In addition, certain songs can display sectarian meaning when performed in particular contexts or directed towards particular audiences.

## 11. FOOTBALL

- 11.1 Football was identified as both the cause and effect of sectarianism in Scotland, a somewhat contradictory result that was fluid and moved with the discussion. For instance, one participant in the Western Isles, when asked who was more likely to engage in sectarianism in her community, said:

*It is the football. It is all football-related. I mean the young ones as I said beat each other up after a football match.*

- 11.2 But later, when asked if there were aspects of Scottish culture that encouraged sectarianism on the islands, she spoke about conflicts over local government on the islands, rather than football), and said instead:

*Yes. It is historic hard wiring, the absolute Calvinistic anti-Catholics ... and then the thing has been turned on its head and the Catholics have been the people accused of sectarianism. I mean how can 18 percent have that level of power? They don't understand the equation about the power and the prejudice. (Woman, Interview 5, Western Isles)*

- 11.3 Football has dominated media discussions of sectarianism in Scotland. Furthermore, identifying the extent to which football rivalry overlaps with sectarianism has been a controversial topic in Scottish sports journalism and Scottish academic study for decades. It is probably not surprising that we

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<sup>16</sup> See further Millar (2015).

often found our participants' views about football quite hard to analyse. One topic that occurred repeatedly, though, was the role of Glasgow clubs, Celtic and Rangers.

### **Celtic and Rangers**

*It's overwhelming. The question of sectarianism in the West of Scotland and it is inextricably linked to those two football teams, you know, for historical reasons or whatever. I think it has become a lot more diluted in recent years, but there is still a hard core on both sides (Man, Interview 1, Glasgow)*

*I think when you talk to any Glaswegian person, when you say the word 'sectarian' they automatically assume Celtic-Rangers, Catholic-Protestant. I think that is the overwhelming image, when you want to get into the nitty-gritty of it of course, you can talk about other things. But that is probably the thing your mind thinks of first. (Woman, Focus group 1, Glasgow).*

- 11.4 The rivalry between Celtic and Rangers was the issue most associated with sectarianism among the participants in this study. Despite it not being explicitly asked about by the interviewers, a great many participants pointed to Celtic and Rangers as two of the principal sources of sectarianism in Scotland. Many spoke about instances of sectarianism on both sides of this rivalry, and spoke of it being used as a means to understand a person's cultural, religious, and political background:

*... most of my friends were boys growing up and if they didnae answer correctly they could have ended up in a fight, you know? And it did happen on a regular enough basis that it was an issue. So yeah, that definitely wasn't, you know, sort of 'what team do you support?' It was 'who are you? Celtic or Rangers?' (Woman, Focus group 1, Glasgow).*

- 11.5 She continued by describing the link between football and religion in her own mind as she was growing up, and how she did not challenge such assumptions until her teenage years. She highlighted the conflation of football and religion as central to the formation of a particular social identity in west-central Scotland:

*I think especially when you are that age it was one and the same I think. Football and religion was definitely very interconnected and when you are a kid you don't necessarily understand why ... I just assumed that was the way it went. You were Catholic: you were Celtic. You were Protestant: you were Rangers. It didn't occur to me to question that until I was at least sixteen, seventeen. (Focus Group 1, Glasgow).*

- 11.6 It should be stressed that such strong identification with Celtic or Rangers does by itself not constitute a form of sectarianism. Such 'ownership' of the two teams relates to group identity and has been discussed in academic scholarship on 'fandom' (Gray 2007). What we are examining here is how our



participants described this as being sectarian. In another interview, one participant posited:

*It is the way for them to self-identify. They [young men] are just entering the world. It is a case of, 'this is what I am! What are you?' And this is the way that they find it, through football, through the lodge or through whatever. And that is how they express it. And I don't think you can blame folk for that. ... But I can well understand these folk who feel powerless in their everyday lives or they want to give their life a bit of meaning. This is a way to do it.*

- 11.7 When asked if he thought there were groups more likely to engage in sectarian behaviour, the same participant said:

*It is most likely to be 16-24 year old, white guys who have an interest in football and an interest in drinking. And I think it is because it is that toxic combination of youthful idealism - means as well - which is a big part of it I think. So if you can afford to go to the football, so if you can afford to go to the pub, all these affiliated pubs, or if you can afford to pay lodge fees or whatever, I think means is actually a part of it. So you have got that toxic combination of idealism and means. (Man, Interview 6, Glasgow)*

- 11.8 Throughout many of the interviews in the Glasgow and North Lanarkshire case studies in particular, there was an almost immediate conflation between sectarianism and football. Many participants made it clear that in their view the two issues were so intertwined that they could not be separated. Often, what was evident was the interchangeable nature of the terms Catholic and Protestant with Celtic and Rangers respectively. Pubs and bars affiliated with supporters of either Rangers or Celtic were frequently referred to as Protestant or Catholic pubs, strengthening this association.

- 11.9 This has been pointed out before, with Steve Bruce et al arguing: 'When people think of sectarianism, they have in mind the rivalry between Celtic and Rangers' (2004: 88). When this conflation of terms was pointed out to participants they apologised for it, feeling that this was perhaps an error on their part and that the issues should be separate; however this consistent amalgamation of the terms does show the importance of football, and in particular, Celtic and Rangers, within the discussion of sectarianism in Glasgow and its surrounding areas (although not only there).

*And if you are a Partick Thistle supporter, well it used to be 'are you a Celtic Partick Thistle supporter or a Rangers Partick Thistle supporter?' (Man, Interview 4, N Lanarkshire)*

- 11.10 Although this importance of football may support the criticism by some commentators that in fact the problem in Glasgow is not one of sectarianism as such but of football violence (Bruce et al 2004; Waiton 2012 and 2013), religion need not necessarily be the only or most prominent factor in sectarianism. Nor does the role of religion need to be based around a narrow concept of religion as dogma:

'The equation of religion with doctrinal statements is an absurd reduction, and when it is used to dismiss religion, it distorts analysis (of sectarianism).' (Leichty & Clegg 2000: 50)

- 11.11 The Rangers-Celtic derby games have taken on a symbolic significance as a clash between the two opposing sides, resulting in the days in and around a game being heightened occasions where the possibility of sectarian actions is increased.

'Most football clubs reflect facets – economic, social, religious, cultural, symbolic, ideological and political – of the prevalent and ascendant features of the wider society and more specific community that they spring from and inhabit.' (Bradley 2013: 75)

- 11.12 Occasionally Hearts supporters were mentioned by Celtic-supporting interviewees as being as bad if not worse than Rangers supporters in their sectarianism against Catholics: this was put down, not only to the 'Britishness' of the club but also the perceived affluence of an Edinburgh-based team as opposed to the perceived poverty of Glasgow-based Celtic. There was much less consensus, though, about the presence of such attitudes in the Edinburgh teams:

*So there's almost like a group of people in the Hearts fan base who were almost, you know, like taking Union Jacks to like, you know, Hearts games and almost everybody would be sorta like 'ffftt. What?' but they had this kind of 'aw yeah well you know like that's what Rangers do, so' (Man, Interview 5, Edinburgh)*

Participant 2: *It's not an issue in Edinburgh no.*

Participant 5: *I don't think it's as much an issue.*

Interviewer: *With Hibs and Hearts?*

Participant 4: *No, not at all, because like, wee Mike and, like, Davie and that said, it's just like, it's just not an issue over there, you know what I mean.*

Interviewer: *Really.*

Participant 2: *They are just all football.*

Participant 3: *Is it? Aye.*

Participant 2: *Yeah.*

Participant 3: *I don't think the Hibs march and all that sort of stuff do they? (Football supporters, Focus Group 2, Glasgow)*

- 11.13 This focus on Celtic and Rangers and sectarianism, it was posited during the second Glasgow focus group, is due to their dominance of the Scottish game. A large amount of media coverage centres upon them, highlighting or magnifying the issue of sectarianism, perhaps misleadingly. To those in this focus group the term ‘sectarianism’ had essentially come to mean trouble between the two rival football fans rather than relating to issues between Catholics and Protestants. Perhaps paradoxically<sup>17</sup> it was also suggested that the reason for the sectarian tensions was due to the large travelling support from Ireland, particularly Northern Ireland, attending games at both Celtic and Rangers, bringing with it sectarian tensions that had then become established as part of the rivalry between the two teams.
- 11.14 It is sometimes said that Celtic and Rangers fans embrace either side of the Irish conflict partly as a way to exaggerate the difference between themselves and their biggest rivals.<sup>18</sup> The fans have adopted several opposing identities, such as Irish/British; Catholic/Protestant; Nationalist/Unionist; Republican/Loyalist; Palestinian/Israeli; Colonised/Coloniser; Other/ Dominant Majority. This tactic serves to heighten tensions and rivalries, even if the links are only superficial. However, they also heighten the likelihood of causing and taking offence. As a result, it may be that Celtic and Rangers fans are more likely to interpret symbols of Irish history as something intended to cause offence.
- 11.15 Some participants took the view that sectarian tensions in Glasgow had decreased since the demotion of Rangers to the lower leagues of Scottish football, providing fewer annual occasions in which sectarian animosity between the two fans could be realised.
- 11.16 Some mentioned that in their opinion Rangers fans are more anti-Celtic than Celtic are anti-Rangers and this would in turn have an effect on sectarian tensions or violence; if either were to take place it would be more likely that Rangers fans would be the instigators. Some supporters of other teams, however, particularly Partick Thistle, rubbished the idea, claiming that both sides are as bad as each other.
- 11.17 Supporters in other cities also often referred to Rangers and/or Celtic when discussing football and sectarianism. A Dundee resident for instance said she actively avoids sectarianism by refusing to travel to Glasgow to support Dundee:

Participant: *Celtic can be ... they are just a bitty ... To be honest I think they are too drunk when they arrive in the town and then they are obviously, they are racist. Their background brings them to things they shouldn't be singing, and at one point I raised a complaint. Because it is supposed to be no allowed in grounds anymore.*

Interviewer: *You mean sectarian songs?*

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<sup>17</sup> ‘Paradoxically’ because this travelling support would bring genuine sectarian tensions that cannot then be simply dismissed as ‘trouble between the two sides’.

<sup>18</sup> For a fuller discussion of this polarisation by fans, see Theodoropoulou (2007).

Participant: *Yeah, you are no supposed to be able to sing them, and I raised a complaint with a policeman at the ground and said 'look you are stopping us doing certain things, why aren't you stopping them?' 'Because it is easier for me to throw you out than throw 30,000 of them out. So you either sit down, or you are out.' Haha if you are like that, okay [laughter]. But if you are in a group of 20,000 you can do what you like, because that's never going to change. And none of their sectarian songs are going to change because they still get to do it ... they won't put them out because they are frightened it causes problems in the ground ...*

*I think wherever they go, they take it. They take it with them because like I say I have been to numerous football grounds, I do travel a lot for football, and I have no experienced it anywhere else. So much so, I won't travel to Glasgow. (Woman, Interview 3, Dundee)*

- 11.18 Recent problems faced by Rangers aside, the modern history of Celtic and Rangers is of two powerful teams with similarly large fanbases<sup>19</sup> and strongly-asserted identities, somewhat evenly matched and in a combative struggle with each other.
- 11.19 However, this does not map on to the larger society of Scotland.<sup>20</sup> Whether as religious or cultural identities, Catholicism and Protestantism appear to play a much more muted role in Scottish life than might be supposed from the rivalry of the two teams.
- 11.20 Many of our participants did not have religious beliefs and did not associate themselves with a faith. Many of those who did have a faith spoke of it as a private matter that they actively took steps to prevent being a source of conflict in their social lives. Often they described this as a choice, although we should keep in mind the discussion in chapter 4 of the young woman who spoke about the Catholics she knew keeping their faith '*semi-quiet*'.
- 11.21 Typically, both groups suggested that religious faith, or identity, did not form a part of their everyday relationships with other people in the community, beyond places of worship, other than as a source of moral guidance. Many also maintained that the religious faith of others whether at work, school or in informal social contexts was of no relevance to how they interact. This was a widespread assertion that manifested itself in comments such as:

*My religion is something that is very, very personal to me. I have never ever ... made a judgment on somebody for their ... or I have never thought of somebody differently because they have told me what religion they are. (Man, Interview 6, Glasgow)*

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<sup>19</sup> The latest Scottish Social Attitudes Survey in 2014 found that Celtic and Rangers were each supported by 12% of the Scottish population (Hinchliffe et al 2015).

<sup>20</sup> See also here Kelly (2011), though note his caveats about (a) the use of the term sectarianism and (b) the equating of Celtic and Rangers.

- 11.22 In the Scotland Census 2011, 15.9% described themselves as Roman Catholic, 32.4% as Church of Scotland, 5.5% as Other Christian and 37% as having no religion. Furthermore, in the Scottish Social Attitudes survey in 2014, only a quarter of those surveyed said that being Protestant or Catholic was an important part of their identity (Hinchliffe et al 2015). The decline has been much more severe for Church of Scotland allegiance than for other Christian faiths.<sup>21</sup>

Because the 2011 Census in Scotland did not ask people for their religion of upbringing, we lack the data to identify whether certain religious or ethno-religious groups (such as those of Irish Catholic origin) are materially disadvantaged compared to others. So many people now identify as having no current religion that it is difficult to track the life chances of those born into a particular ethno-religious heritage. Research suggests that there is now socio-economic parity between these groups<sup>22</sup>.

However, despite these caveats, it is worth noting the 2011 Census finding that people who identified as 'Roman Catholic' were much more likely to live in deprived areas (23%) than those who identified as 'Church of Scotland' (12%). It is also important to note that a number of factors have been identified as important in understanding any associations between religion and measures of disadvantage, such as that those identifying as Roman Catholic in Scotland have a relatively young age profile compared to those who identify as Church of Scotland. They also have a more diverse ethnic population, are more likely to have dependent children, and be lone parents.

- 11.23 The Celtic and Rangers rivalry obscures these differences in population size and religious identity. The rivalry of the teams and their fans is not always sectarian in nature. And when it is, it is not a mirror image of how Scotland's religious groups interact.

Interviewer: *Do you think there are particular places or times when you would be more likely to experience sectarian behaviour?*

Participant: *Oh absolutely ... Well you would obviously see it in football. At the marches.*

Interviewer: *Anywhere outside of football and the marches you might see it?*

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<sup>21</sup> Rosie (2014) draws together data from Scottish Social Attitudes Surveys and Scottish Election Surveys to show how the proportion of those describing themselves as having 'no religion' has grown and how allegiance to the Church of Scotland among young people has plummeted over a generation. The proportion describing themselves as Catholic or other faiths has not changed much. Similar results appear in the Scotland Census 2011 (Scottish Government 2014).

<sup>22</sup> For instance, an examination of structural disadvantage in the 2013 evidence review on sectarianism concluded that 'Catholics are not disadvantaged in terms of income and occupational class and that younger Catholics were no longer disadvantaged in terms of educational attainment' (Justice Analytical Services 2013: 5, and Section 3).

Participant: *No, I wouldn't say so because... there isn't another sort of festival or another game or another type of lifestyle that the perception about religion is so, is so, you know, prevalent.* (Man, Interview 4, N Lanarkshire)

## **12. LOYALIST AND IRISH REPUBLICAN PROCESSIONS (MARCHES AND PARADES)**

12.1 We will say little about Loyalist and Irish Republican marches and parades<sup>23</sup> because these have been explored in one of the sister projects (Hamilton-Smith et al 2015). There was however a great deal of animosity expressed towards these events among our participants. A widely shared view was that community marches and parades that have the potential to be conflictual should have financial penalties imposed on their host organisations, be banned outright, or be moved away from busy public spaces. Some participants however commented that the parades themselves were not problematic: rather the more serious problem was those who tag along for the purpose of creating trouble. This has also been mentioned in previous research (NFO Social Research (2003: 13)).

12.2 Several participants suggested that Loyalist or Republican parades should be banned altogether, but some added that they would not feel the same way about, for instance, Boys Brigade, Gala Day parades or 'Heroes Return' parades. So, the feeling was confined largely to the processions that are perceived as traditional flash points for sectarian conflict.

12.3 One Edinburgh participant, asked why he felt that the conditions for sectarianism did not appear to exist in his community, said:

*I think in our community as well we don't have the flash points every year, we don't have the parades either, so there is not that catalyst to make people build up to it, to build up any sort of awareness, hatred, aggression or anything.* (Man, Interview 3, Edinburgh)

12.4 A woman in the North Lanarkshire case study said, talking about both Republican and Loyalist parades:

*It's because we have a youth club that's brimming at the seams, you can't crick [squeeze] people in. And then come up to March they just start disappearing because they all go to band practice and it's like it, you know, its encouraged in the area. Fuelled in the area.*

*You know, we work as a big group and they disappear so they're letting half the team down to do this ... and it isn't just Catholics it's the other part of the people who are not involved in the Order. It's, there's like people who will, you know, that are just in that area whose families are*

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<sup>23</sup> These are defined as 'processions' for the purposes of the Police, Public Order and Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2006. See also Hamilton-Smith et al (2015).

*traditionally been involved in that and they'll never get out of it, regardless of whether they want to go or not they are going. (Woman, Focus Group 1, Glasgow)*

- 12.5 One participant, however, described his wish that the parades could be inclusive and celebratory, even if at the moment *'we are so far, far, far off from it'*:

*But these things that appear on streets, whether it's a Hibs walk, or it's an Orange walk, I would love one day for an Orange walk to be almost like a Mardi Gras. (Man, Interview 5, Glasgow)*

### **13. SIGNIFIERS**

- 13.1 Various signifiers mark out polarised identities in Scotland at the community level. Many Scots still find sectarian significance in particular markers of group identity such as the colour of clothing, songs, tunes and flags, the name of the school attended, and the name and spelling of the surname.

*Oh it is so obvious, isn't it? ... I think a combination of your name and your school gives the game away for 90% of the time. (Man, Interview 7, Glasgow)*

- 13.2 He spoke of a 'Glaswegian, a West of Scotland' compulsion to seek out information betraying a person's religious background, adding, *'I have no idea why, I suppose it is just an insecurity amongst people'*. Several participants explained that asking someone's football team affiliation was used as a tactic to discover someone's religious background.

- 13.3 These were not necessarily understood Scotland-wide: it is interesting for example, how often 'green' was mentioned in the Glasgow and North Lanarkshire case studies, but rarely so in the Dundee and Edinburgh - even though one of Edinburgh's main two football teams has a green and white strip.

- 13.4 In contrast, one woman participant in the Glasgow case study recalled a story overheard in a Rangers affiliated bar in the area; in it a man described how he chastised his nephew for wearing a green t-shirt, presumably because of the colours affiliation with Celtic/Irishness. She went on to mention how her friend was refused admittance to a Rangers-affiliated pub in the east end of the city due to his shoes having green and white laces, even though he himself was a Rangers fan.

Another participant described how in her job in a central Scotland shoe-shop, one customer refused to try on a pair of green trainers, even though they were only to be used to identify the size of his feet. A participant in Glasgow described how he and his friends were made to feel uncomfortable to the point of leaving a Rangers affiliated bar because they were wearing too many

items of clothing containing the colour green, with one customer loudly saying that there was, *'too much green in the room.'*

- 13.5 These stories were told to us after we asked for examples of 'sectarian behaviour'. What was intended may have been different from the impact that it had. It is possible that the people who were singling out the colour green may have intended it as legitimate sporting partisanship, while some of the observers saw it as sectarian bigotry. But, equally, the participants who gave us these examples had not chosen to be involved in sporting partisanship at the time; these incidents for them had been an unwelcome intrusion as they went about their everyday lives.
- 13.6 Several participants thought that someone's name can be an indicator of their religion. Another signifier often mentioned was the school one attended: attendance at a Catholic school would generally be taken to mean that the person in question was themselves a Catholic.
- 13.7 Some participants from areas with a large Catholic population stated that most people assumed they were Catholic because of their home town. However, none of the Glasgow participants mentioned the areas of Glasgow in which they lived as being a marker of religion: in fact the opposite was mentioned when a participant stated that the schemes around Parkhead<sup>24</sup> where he grew up were mixed with Celtic and Rangers fans.
- 13.8 All of these distinctions, though, were cut across by age, gender and football affiliation among others. There is no simple east/west, north/south or island/mainland division.
- 13.9 These shared meanings about markers are an important part of escaping overly-subjective discussions about sectarianism. Without some understanding of context, there is a risk that an analysis uninformed by local knowledge and experience will disproportionately focus on what the individual person intends. Or, the impact on the audience may be dismissed as a matter of individual sensitivity. Alternatively, it may suggest that there is sectarian meaning in an encounter, when this does not reflect what the people present themselves thought.
- 13.10 This is not to say that all research participants' accounts of sectarianism are equally valid as objective accounts or equal proof that a phenomenon exists. What we are presenting is an analysis of community understandings. Personal stories need to be understood as part of individual and community narratives, or much of their meaning is lost.
- 13.11 This is particularly important given the 'discursive deficit' we mentioned in chapter 3. One possible reason we have identified for sectarianism being seen as a contentious issue is because it is currently poorly understood in Scottish society. Not only is there widespread variability in people's understanding of what constitutes sectarianism, but our participants also often

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<sup>24</sup> The area surrounding Celtic's stadium, and a traditionally Irish Catholic area of the city.



did not classify certain forms of prejudiced behaviour that were indirectly based on ethno-religious identity as sectarianism.

- 13.12 For example, one participant (Interview 4, N Lanarkshire) identified a variety of regular problems in her community such as fighting between Catholics and Protestants, Celtic and Rangers pubs divided along sectarian lines, football strips as religiously identifiable and antagonistic, local clustering of Protestants and Catholics in Scotland and many other verbal and material incidents of conflict. She was however happy to suggest towards the end of her interview that 'sectarianism' is 'not a problem' in Scotland, and that she felt that Scotland was today a fairly liberal and progressive society - despite the manifest stories of sectarian conflict and prejudice mentioned throughout her interview.
- 13.13 This speaks to the problems of identifying and defining 'sectarianism' in Scottish society, and also to the lack of a regular everyday discourse about sectarianism.

## **14. SECTARIAN DISCRIMINATION**

### **Employment**

- 14.1 Few participants were able to concretely identify a recent occasion when someone was denied employment due to their religion. We cited one in chapter 6. Another recalled an applicant being denied a job in the Govan Shipyards two years ago because he was a Catholic. He was identified as such because of his Irish Catholic name and the school he attended. Our participant was informed that this was the reason for his refusal by a group who worked there, who said it was known by employees that this was the reason. In two separate interviews participants mentioned golf clubs that would refuse Catholics membership based on their names/school attended, and in one interview a participant named a particular golf club.
- 14.2 Some participants across all the case studies were sure that sectarian discrimination in employment used to take place in the past but probably not today. This was put down to nepotism as well as sectarianism. These past stories about employers (whether anti-Catholic, anti-Protestant, or promoting a more specific strand of Christianity) ranged from small individual employers to larger companies and public bodies, not just in west-central Scotland but also for instance in Dundee. Several were named as specific examples.
- 14.3 In a Glasgow focus group, participants answered with a very strong 'Yes' when asked if sectarian discrimination takes place today, yet when pressed were unable to come up with any concrete examples in employment, suggesting a perception (but not personal experience) of sectarian discrimination in employment in Glasgow.<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, if people believe

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<sup>25</sup> A similar finding was highlighted in NFO Social Research (2003).

discrimination to be continuing, and if they adjust their lives accordingly so as to avoid instances of it, this would have impact by itself.

### **Sectarianism among the powerful**

- 14.4 As we mentioned in chapter 8, several participants brought up the impact of Mrs Thatcher's political era and argued that it had worsened sectarian tensions. A couple mentioned the role of the media. These apart, though, it was rare for our participants to speak about sectarianism in the most powerful sectors of society.
- 14.5 A few participants in the Western Isles said that the Free Church of Scotland, strong in Stornoway where the local council was based, dominated financial decision-making, to the detriment of both Catholics and other Protestants in a way that they felt could be sometimes interpreted as sectarian.
- 14.6 Outwith the islands, it was rarely mentioned, other than by two interviewees. The first spoke at a few points in the interview about how he thought that Scottish government was dominated by an austere, Protestant outlook, both at national level in Edinburgh and in some local councils, particularly in the northern half of Scotland:

Interviewer: *How important is the religious aspect of that rivalry?*

Participant: *More than people seem to recognise. Always has been. I worked in Edinburgh, it was pretty bad. It was always you know.*

Interviewer: *Do you think that might still be the case then?*

Participant: *Absolutely, in Edinburgh? [Yeah] Oh aye, that is where the government is.*

Interviewer: *What do you mean by that?*

Participant: *Well, as I said earlier it is the Presbyterian lifestyle. The governments are aware and they employ people who have got the same likes and dislikes ...*

Interviewer: *Do you think that is a trait of the SNP or the government in general?*

Participant: *No, I think that is a trait of political parties in general. (Man, Interview 4, N Lanarkshire)*

- 14.7 Another interviewee insisted that more research should be done to study the powerful:

Interviewer: *And do you think there are people in your community that are more likely to be sectarian? Participate in sectarian behaviour. Certain types of people or certain groups in the population?*

Participant: *Yeah. Yeah. I think there's certain ones where it's more explicit. But there's lots of it where it is implicit. As well. You know, so. And I think the explicit thing is a thing we focus on a bit too much so it will be people from a certain class, social category, that's where they sort of shine the spotlight. I'm sorry, let's shine it on our teachers, our doctors, our lawyers, our politicians. That's where it needs to be shone.*

Interviewer: *So it's not ... So you think people say that it's working class?*

Participant: *Yes. (Man, Interview 5, Glasgow)*

Otherwise, however, we were surprised at how rarely this was mentioned.

## **15. UNDERSTANDING HOW STORIES ARE TOLD**

- 15.1 One phenomenon we often noticed in interviews was how long it took for some stories to emerge, and then to be told. We analysed some of our transcripts using the method of narrative analysis, which looks at the ways that participants introduce and present individual and collective stories.
- 15.2 It is through the use of stories and storytelling – between friends and family as well as in the mass media – that we position ourselves and our lives, in relation to other people and wider social forces. Furthermore, the stories that people tell about their experiences tell us something about the cultural framework within which individuals make sense of their lives. In essence, 'narratives are never simply reports of experiences, rather they make sense of and therefore inevitably distort those experiences' (Elliott 2005: 23).
- 15.3 The structural elements in several narratives relating experiences of sectarianism were very similar. Many were set a long time ago and/or in another place. Glasgow was recalled as a setting for a disproportionate number of the stories, particularly combined with a setting in the past:

*Oh yeah. I used to love the parades, I would run along. [...] I love it. I missed it, I used to love it. And I remember you are not supposed to run in front of them, a band between each band, and this guy grabbed me. He was such a really, really nice guy, explained it all to me. He says, 'Listen son you don't that, you are not supposed to do that. Just wait until they all pass and then cross over.' And I used to love the music, but I got a terrible shock in the late 70s, the mid-70s in Queen's Park and they were all there. And there was this horrendous Northern Irish politician speaking in the bandstand, which I think is gone now, Queen's Park. And the bile and the vicious, evil, bigotry from him about killing Catholics and horrendous, and they were all clapping. That was my worst experience ever, that was Glasgow ... (Man, Focus Group 1, Western Isles)*

- 15.4 Here, in the abstract of the story (*'I used to love the parades'*) the participant sets up and summarises a significant event that was problematic enough to have brought a change of outlook. (That is: *'I used to love the parades [but I don't anymore, for the following reason ...]'*) After setting up the story – a mini-story in itself, about *'a really, really nice guy'*, that functions to illustrate the storyteller's previously positive experiences of parades – the storyteller presents a complication evaluated as *'terrible'* and *'horrendous'*: not only did they hear a public speech inciting violence against Catholics, they also witnessed an audience applauding such a *'vicious, evil'* message. Notably, the speaker was an outsider to Glasgow, a Northern Irish politician, and, as such, not someone who would have had to deal with the local repercussions of his violent rhetoric. Whether this implies that *'Glasgow's problem'* is a reflection of hatreds played out elsewhere, is unclear. But it appears to suggest the participant believes that the conflict in Northern Ireland has been a (historic) driver of community conflicts in Glasgow.
- 15.5 Another story, although shocking, was also striking because of the way that it was told. The woman in the interview spoke with considerable enthusiasm about her life, and at one point, speaking about experiences of sectarianism, said *'I have never in my life really experienced anything of any consequence whatsoever in that area. I really haven't.'* It was only very much later in the interview that she suddenly remembered the following story, becoming quite upset.

Participant: *Well I'll tell you. There was a very bad incident. And this is the last one I am going to tell you.*

Interviewer: *Sure.*

Participant: *[...] I always wanted to work with the poor and I always wanted to help those less fortunate. I really did. I don't want to be with those who have everything. [...] so I chose the Order and they were wonderful. And the Convent said, you know, that to practice at that time was actually to work eh work in a job and come in at the weekends, to see how you get on and everything. [...]*

*But then about the June of the following year, so I'd been down there for about 9 months, one of the sweet Sisters, lovely lady, she said, 'you know I think maybe you could go off to a contemplative order to have a go there, you know, because I think you're more....' And it's just so funny because I am so outgoing!*

Interviewer: *[laughs]*

Participant: *... and my family thought I was completely batty. So anyway, I said 'oh yes, that would be fine.' [...] I won't go into the experience of what happened, but something happened which told me most explicitly as if he had come down from Heaven to say 'come on I'll take you back to Edinburgh. You've done enough here.' And it was so profound, er, you know like St Paul and the road to Damascus, that I*

*closed the book, said thank you, went in and said my thank yous in the chapel. [... And then I was resumed into the path. That was 1979. Very happy, very happy. Thatcher came along with all her dreadful policies in the 80s and things started to get very bad at that time. [...] I think they brought in hatchet men from America and em there was, there was some nasty people about at that time. And they were trying to work out how many managers were going to be getting the sack at that time, redundancy. It was a bad time. [...]*

*And then, the hatchet men appeared [...] It was like the Inquisition. And also someone from the so called training unit, she was there. She wasn't allowed to say anything. There was the one main interviewer and it was poison. It was absolute poison. They were talking about the work being adequate but not adequate enough, you know, because they wanted all the profiteering to begin, you know. And em. You know. But then they were trying to find a way for me to go but I dug my heels in and fought my corner very very well. I have always been tenacious, what you call tenacious. But then when he came out with it and 'you'd gone somewhere in the 70s to some kind of nunnery or something like that', it was dreadful, it was a dreadful dreadful thing that happened that day. And that was definitely sectarianism. There is no question about that. Well. You know, I was just blown over and [pause] I left that room [pause] I left that room and you know I was in a very very bad state that day. That was a bad, bad day. A very bad day. And I ended up at the doctor's, and eh I ended up here, and that was one of the days of my life that I think I cried for about eight hours non-stop. And it was dreadful. And em Arthur put me to bed and, the girl from the Staff department, she phoned the next day or something and er Arthur said 'I don't wish to hear from any of you. My wife is not well.' [...]*

*Now was that the time that I took redundancy? [pause] Yes I think I had I think it was very soon after, I can't remember the events then but I really received a reasonable pay-out at the time when, when there was another batch of people to go which was what they wanted to do. I said no I didn't want to. But then of course the Lord came to my aid again [...] And I was here, and I was thinking 'mmm maybe I should really start looking for another job now'. I was only 48. And the phone rang and that was me for the next thirteen years until I retired. But that was bad. That was bad.*

- 15.6 Here, the participant recounts two episodes from her life, linked together by sectarian discrimination. In the first, she tells of how she was called to work in a convent, 'to help those less fortunate'. This chapter in her life closed, and she resumed her career – a decision that made her 'very happy'. The second episode starts when the employer 'brought in hatchet men from America [...] to work out how many managers were going to be getting the sack' in her Scottish workplace; in contrast to the previously happy experience, this 'was a bad time' in her life.
- 15.7 The transition between these stories is significant: the storyteller marks the passage of time not only through reference to the year (1979 into the 1980s),

but also to a change in political-economic outlook that she directly places on Margaret Thatcher and her '*dreadful policies*'. It is this changed political-economic attitude, and the '*poison*' that it introduced to her workplace, that are identified as underlying the story's *complicating action*: she, like other workers, was targeted for sacking or redundancy, in order to maximise profit; and as part of this, the 'hatchet men' interviewed her, in order to try '*to find a way for me to go*'. During this interview, one of the interviewers raised the issue of her time in the Convent: '*you'd gone somewhere in the 70s to some kind of nunnery or something like that*'. The context of the interview, and the way this was raised in order to question her commitment to the company, means it can only be read as sectarian bullying; that the storyteller then says that this event contributed to her decision to take redundancy suggests it was a constructive dismissal, on the ground of religion.

- 15.8 The event clearly affected this woman in a significant way. In the days that immediately followed, she was too ill to work. In the recording of the interview, the moments in her story immediately after she declares '*that was definitely sectarianism*' are marked by a distinct lack of fluency, involving longer than usual pauses, repetition and false starts ( '*Well. You know, I was just blown over and [pause] I left that room [pause] I left that room and you know ...*'). Finally, her evaluation of the story is peppered with repeat intensified evaluations ('*it was dreadful, it was a dreadful dreadful thing*'; '*I was in a very very bad state that day. That was a bad, bad day. A very bad day*'). These are all indications that, still, after 30 years, she finds these events difficult to talk about.
- 15.9 Such stories indicate the contribution of qualitative research methods, where participants can be asked more about what they what they recall, in order to examine the extent to which those opinions are stable. They also reveal the limitations of past research on sectarianism that took participants' first response as their final response.

## 16. STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

- 16.1 Many participants offered their views on what might be done in their local area to reduce problems of sectarianism. A popular solution was education, whether through schools or through community programmes that could reach families.

*Sometimes if you are really wedded to an identity and somebody else has a different identity, then you can see where there is potential for conflict there. But I think what averts that particularly here, I just think it is this push on tolerance. Particularly at the school ... now the kids actually write their sort of anti-bullying policy and they are tolerant of not just themselves and each other but the world at large, and all the different religions and all this thing. And you think wow, the fact that they are buying into it is what makes it work. (Woman, Interview 1, Western Isles)*

- 16.2 Many of our participants saw sectarianism as something that derived from ignorance and from values learned through families and social contacts. It was common for participants to say that there is no quick solution. A few argued that current generations could not be reached, and that the answer was to focus on the young. Poverty and social exclusion were also emphasised as a cause by several participants.
- 16.3 As we have mentioned in this report, some suggested other solutions such as banning or severely limiting Loyalist and Irish Republican marches and parades (this would however be difficult to reconcile with rights of freedom of expression); ending (or, for others, continuing) separate schooling for children of different religious backgrounds; and greater use of criminal sanctions (whether as a 'zero tolerance' approach in everyday policing, or particularly in relation to football disorder). Some saw faith bodies as a means of integrating communities; in contrast others insisted religion would need to decline before sectarianism could:

*People don't care enough about it here, man, people don't care about religion's dying, so the quicker the churches just shut up shop ... and the lodges do the same, that would get rid of it. (Man, Focus Group 2, Glasgow)*

- 16.4 Evaluating such suggestions is outwith the focus of this report. It may be useful here, though, to examine specific instances where the communities we studied appeared to have some success in dealing with problems they identified as sectarian. What works may be a local solution suiting a particular area, rather than a nationwide one. Furthermore, if one result of the 'discursive deficit' is that people tend not to talk about experiences of sectarianism, then it may be difficult for anti-sectarian initiatives to attract community support. In such cases, a local approach may be helpful.
- 16.5 In the Western Isles, we encountered stories about sectarian incidents but found relatively little concern about the impact of these, when compared to other case study sites. Participants spoke freely and confidently about experiences they or others had had, and issues that concerned them. When asked what worked in their community as a means of tackling sectarianism, several focused on the close social relationships within their local area that crossed religious groups.
- 16.6 Religious observance was much more important to the communities here than in the other case study sites, but both individuals and their religious representatives had strong interactions and deep ties. These could be found in their local communities, in shared religious ceremonies, and in the interactions promoted within the local schools. One man, who was an atheist himself, said about a Catholic official:

*He told me that when he was young ... Sunday comprised of going to the Roman Catholic Church in the morning and going to the Presbyterian service in the afternoon and then going to another one ... He says they didn't escape from religion but they saw both sides ... So there was no*

*fear of the unknown and there was no sort of 'them and us' and there was just a recognition that they had slightly different beliefs and there was no problem because there was no physical separation. Eh, and this as I say is a high-ranking member of the Roman Catholic Church in the islands to this day (Man, Interview 8, Western Isles)*

- 16.7 One young woman said, about her previous home:

*... It is quite a Catholic area, and we were made to feel very welcome. They all knew we were Protestant ... And that didn't seem to make any difference to people down there. They were equally friendly, welcomed us into the village, stop and speak ... we socialised equally and the people were equally inviting in terms of invitations to birthday parties for our kids and things like that ... What they did there was they offered everybody who wasn't a crofter a potato patch on the machair ... what they did was they ploughed it for you next to their potato patch and you got, you know, so many strips. And then they would harvest it for you as well. (Woman, Interview 1, Western Isles)*

- 16.8 There appeared to be significant social support that would help to neutralise the harm caused by sectarian incidents. Much of this reflects the distinctive histories of the islands, so is not generalisable beyond them to Scotland as a whole: what is interesting is how this succeeds locally.

- 16.9 Elsewhere, several participants focused on the multicultural, cosmopolitan culture that had developed in their local area. Some saw this as diluting old, possibly sectarian identities. Although not all participants welcomed the arrival of new ethnic communities, for others, transient populations were seen as beneficial: some saw the changing populations as a means by which communities learned to be more tolerant.

*I think [our area] is lucky that it's never had a group over a period of history that has settled and built up that sort of base for sectarianism ... that's what sectarianism is, an extremism and ... ah ... I don't feel that we have that in [our area]. I think we have, where it's a busy city, everyone is busy, everyone is exposed to a multicultural society from an early age, and people are very tolerant of everyone around them. (Man, Interview 3, Edinburgh)*

- 16.10 As we mentioned in Chapter 4, some participants expressed concern, however, about presenting sectarianism as a Scotland-wide problem or an element of the national character, fearing that this would encourage other Scots to adopt sectarian identities where they were not currently present.

*Thinking about my nephews so they're up in Aberdeenshire, and they em, they get taught about sectarianism in the classroom, but the teacher was saying ... that they actually know nothing about it and then they teach it as part of, you know, the government wants sectarianism talked about in the schools, and he says that they teach it and then the kids go out into the playground and then they suddenly start saying 'oh you're a Protestant,*



*you're a Catholic' which they didn't do before. So it's almost a kind of product of, it's supposed to address the issue but it seems to kind of raise it in people's consciousness. (Woman, Interview 4, Edinburgh)*

## 17. CONCLUSIONS

17.1 From our discussions, several key findings emerged.

### The discursive deficit

- 17.2 Many participants said they were not used to discussing sectarianism, and a few were unsure what the term meant, in many cases even when describing personal experiences. Many seemed to be more fluent when discussing racism.
- 17.3 The project team did find various experiences of sectarianism across all the case study communities, but to differing degrees. This 'discursive deficit' was however to be found across all the areas we visited. It is not clear why this is, but several possible explanations emerged. One is, as some participants said, that there may be very little or no sectarianism in their local communities. Some criticised media or governments for representing sectarianism as part of the Scottish national character.
- 17.4 Other possible explanations for the discursive deficit are that some experiences of sectarianism are not seen as suitable for everyday, or even private, conversation (the '*silent topic*'). If so, there may be victims who are reluctant to seek social support. Some people who do not themselves feel subject to sectarian prejudice may be resistant to believing it exists in their communities, and be inclined to ignore signs of it. There can also be a problem of 'social indifference', where most members of a majority group do not actively look for markers of difference. This can be positive, but may also mean that they are unaware whether prejudice or bigotry exists.
- 17.5 It may also be that the declining visibility of religion in Scottish public (and private) life has made such discussions less common than they might once have been. Many of our participants described themselves as religious, but nevertheless said that religious faith, or identity, did not form a part of their everyday relationships with other people in the community, beyond places of worship, other than as a source of moral guidance.
- 17.6 Another possibility may be that for some Scots, sectarianism is normalised: overlooked because it seems to be a normal part of life. Some of our participants described incidents of prejudiced behaviour as being linked to ethno-religious identity, but they did not (or did not at first) classify them as sectarian. Many also described avoidance strategies they used, such as avoiding certain places (perhaps at certain times) or concealing markers of religious identity such as school or family background.

## **Where sectarianism happens**

- 17.7 It appeared that community experiences of sectarianism were more intense in west-central Scotland than in the other communities we visited, but stories were told about sectarianism in all of the communities. There were however specific places and times that our participants flagged up as increasing the likelihood of them experiencing sectarianism.
- 17.8 The days on which football matches happened (particularly those involving Celtic and Rangers) were mentioned frequently. Some participants referred to being cautious about visiting - or even walking by - specific pubs on these days and to being careful on public transport. Alcohol was frequently cited as an aggravating factor causing sectarian behaviour to spill out. Parades (whether Loyalist or Irish Republican or both) were also mentioned often. Social media, online environments, and email presented another set of locations where many participants recalled experiences of sectarianism.
- 17.9 What was striking however was not just where sectarianism happened, but where it did not. Even in the most troubled areas, sectarianism appeared to happen only within particular places or at particular times. Participants might live within a very short distance of each other, yet one might encounter sectarian behaviour daily, while another might have difficulty recalling any experience of it at all. This makes it particularly hard to estimate the prevalence and nature of Scottish sectarianism.
- 17.10 Concerns were raised by a small number of the participants about experiences of sectarianism in employment. There were however few accounts of this being personally experienced by participants.
- 17.11 Almost all discussions focused on everyday life. Other than a few mentions of the media, the impact of Mrs Thatcher's governments, and some religious divisions in local government, it was very rare for our participants to bring up the role of the powerful in society as a cause of sectarianism.

## **Gender, generations and families**

- 17.12 The examples of sectarian behaviour our participants gave were usually masculine behaviours directed by men to both men and women. Stories about sectarian jokes, banter and abuse were usually about men engaging in such behaviour, and discussions about sectarian family influences also tended to focus on men. Women were also thought to pass on sectarian prejudices and participate in some sectarian behaviours, and develop avoidance strategies, but our participants mostly blamed men.
- 17.13 Despite rapid changes in Scottish society across generations, many participants nevertheless highlighted the role of families and of older generations in transmitting sectarian beliefs, particularly when these involved what some described as 'bitter' (more deep-seated and virulent) sectarianism. Sometimes this was done by grandparents rather than parents. Some of

these participants nevertheless said that more 'casual' sectarianism, such as the careless use of offensive language, was however declining.

### **Memory and the power of 'exceptional' events**

- 17.14 When asked what made something sectarian, participants often referred not just to the intention of the perpetrator (as is usually the case when people talk about racism) but also to the context. Often, this was historical or an old personal memory. Those who related sectarian stories they regarded as serious tended to do so late on in the interview, hesitantly. Two participants did not even remember a very serious incident until well into the conversation.
- 17.15 To consider incidents merely as unusual or exceptional is to discount what appears to be a lack of social support in some communities to discuss such experiences. This can make the impact of the incidents more severe, and also lead the victim to suppress or reclassify their memories. One issue for communities is not simply how much sectarianism there is, or how serious the incidents appear, but how it is spoken about and dealt with.

### **Jokes, banter, music and other signifiers**

- 17.16 Whether jokes and banter were acceptable, many participants said, depended on the intention and the context. A joke made to friends, intended to be inclusive, would be less likely to be sectarian. If it was designed to be exclusive, or to justify one way of life as better than another, it was more likely to be sectarian.
- 17.17 Songs were often mentioned by our participants as having a particular power to create sectarian meaning. This included not just the literal words, but also where a song was sung or the way it was sung (such as a meaningful pause in a song that hinted at missing sectarian words), or even the tune. Such interpretations are not just assumed by individuals, but are shared and understood across different social groups.
- 17.18 Many still found sectarian significance in particular markers of group identity such as the colour of clothing, songs, tunes and flags, the name of the school attended, and the name and spelling of a surname. These were not necessarily understood Scotland-wide, however, and all of these distinctions were cut across by age, gender and football affiliation among others.

### **Football and Loyalist and Irish Republican processions**

- 17.19 The rivalry between Celtic and Rangers was the issue most associated with sectarianism among our participants. Many spoke of this rivalry being used as a means to understand a person's cultural, religious, and political background, especially in west-central Scotland. Some supporters in other towns said that they would not go to Glasgow to see their own team play Rangers or Celtic because they expected to encounter sectarian aggression.

- 17.20 Throughout many of the interviews in the Glasgow and North Lanarkshire case studies in particular, there was an almost immediate conflation between sectarianism and football. The rivalry of Celtic, Rangers, other teams and their fans is a sporting rivalry, and not always sectarian in nature. However, many participants argued that the two issues were so intertwined that they could not be separated. Often, what was evident was the interchangeable nature of the terms Catholic and Protestant with Celtic and Rangers respectively.
- 17.21 For many of our participants, Catholicism and Protestantism appear to play a much more muted role in Scottish life than might be supposed from the rivalry of the two teams. Many of our participants did not associate themselves with any faith; several others who were religious nonetheless regarded it as a private matter. What is also important, though, is that a Catholic *heritage* remains a minority one. The focus on the rivalry between these two powerful teams obscures all of this.
- 17.22 There was particularly strong animosity expressed towards Loyalist and Irish Republican processions among our participants, with several arguing that they should be banned altogether. Some pointed out that the months spent building up to marches and parades was divisive in itself. However, the feeling was confined largely to those that were perceived as traditional ‘flash points’ for sectarian conflict.

### **Strengthening communities**

- 17.23 Sectarianism in Scotland, where it occurs, is not confined to particular communities. It is however an elusive problem. The solutions that participants identified were often local ones rather than necessarily applicable Scotland-wide. In the Western Isles, it was the close relationships between the long-standing religious communities, in their own local area, that several participants saw as preventing and reducing the effect of sectarianism. Elsewhere, several participants in towns and cities said that the constantly changing populations in their area had diluted older sectarian identities and values.
- 17.24 Furthermore, if one result of the ‘discursive deficit’ is that people tend not to talk about experiences of sectarianism, then this may make it difficult for anti-sectarian initiatives to attract community support. In such cases, a local approach may be helpful. What communities also need, however, seems to be more open discussion in everyday life about what sectarianism is and where it remains, going beyond the context of football, and marches and parades.

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## APPENDIX 1: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All of those who participated in the research were asked to complete a basic demographic questionnaire that was used to ascertain gender, sexuality, class and socio-economic background, (dis)ability, ethnicity and religious affiliation (including for instance church membership).

The aim of adding this extra burden to the fieldwork was to enable our team to monitor the diversity of the sample and to help indicate that the overall sample we recruited was well-targeted with regard to the broader Scottish population. We also considered the demographic information during the analysis, because the personal identities of participants may help explain their experiences of, and responses to, sectarianism.

We anticipated that this questionnaire would probably yield partial data because the researchers were advised to take particular care to emphasise that not all questions need be answered. Nonetheless, most participants were content to answer most of the questions.

Apart from a couple of questions used in other Scottish Government surveys, we selected ours from the ONS harmonised questions, country-specific for Scotland: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/harmonisation/primary-set-of-harmonised-concepts-and-questions/index.html>

and the Scottish Government's Core and Harmonised Survey Questions: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/About/SurveyHarm/corealldownload>

A second religion question was taken from the 2001 Scottish Census. We added a transgender option to the question about gender.

### Results

We have data for 72 participants and have drawn out results for key characteristics. However, we should emphasise again that qualitative research involves too few participants for reliable statistical claims to be made, so these data are not set out here for that purpose.

We focused on hearing from a wide range of people, rather than prescribing fixed proportions for the representation of any particular group. What was important in this project was to aim to meet as broad as possible a selection of Scots, spending enough time with them to explore their perceptions and experiences.

**Gender:** 39 women and 33 men. No-one identified as transgender.

**Sexuality:** Most were heterosexual; two described themselves as gay and one as bisexual.

**Age:** The participants were spread quite evenly across all adult age bands, with slight over-representation of the 25-34 group. Our most senior participant was 96 years old.



**Disability:** Although we met people wherever was convenient for them, it is likely that a study based on social connections will exclude people with some disabilities. Nonetheless, 8 of our participants described themselves as having a long-term disability.

**Ethnicity:** Most described themselves as Scottish, several of whom also identified with a Mixed category (using the Scottish Census questions). The range of other participants - several of whom also identified themselves as Mixed – included people who described themselves as English, Other British, Irish, Polish, Asian, African and Latin-American.

**Religion of origin:** We sought out participants from the smaller faith groups in Scotland, so these are represented in higher numbers in our research than would be the case if this was a proportionate sample of the Scottish population. We interviewed several individuals belonging to or born into smaller Christian or Christian-related groupings in Scotland, such as Free Church of Scotland, Methodist, Scottish Episcopalian, Anglican, Baptist, Orthodox, Baha'i and Evangelical. Several others aligned themselves with a variety of other faiths, such as Sikhism, Buddhism and an unspecified 'spiritual' designation.

Around a third of our participants were born into Roman Catholicism; most of the rest were born into the Church of Scotland.

**Current religious observance:** There was a good mix of participants, including practising observers from the main denominations, inactive believers, atheists, secularists and those for whom religion was of little interest.

**Class/wealth:** Income was represented in all bands, from people living alone on annual incomes of less than £5,200, to those on £78,000 and above. We were able to interview only one person who stated that they were in the +£78,000 band, although some participants were in the +£70,000 band, and some owned homes of very high value.

In contrast, several of our participants were living on very low incomes in areas that are classified as suffering severe social deprivation. Educational attainment was represented at all levels, from School Leaving Certificate or O-Grades/Standards to postgraduate.

## APPENDIX 2: THE CASE STUDY SITES

For our case studies, we selected five local communities across Scotland. First, we chose five regions of Scotland: we describe our reasons for choosing them below. Our aim was not to produce a subset that proportionately represented the Scottish population or any of its cities or rural areas. Rather, we planned to hear a broad range of experiences of many different residents, including those who are less often heard in the sectarianism debate.

Within each region, we then chose a smaller local area: a district of a town or city, or a group of neighbouring islands. We have not named those areas in our report.

We discussed our main criteria for selection in the Research Methods section in the main report. Here, we will say a little more about how we chose the smaller local areas. We started by looking for features such as:

- The area is seen locally as a distinct community with its own identity and in some cases enthusiastic local historians (useful for setting the experiences of older, long-established residents in context)
- It has a broad mix of people from different backgrounds, including a range of different Christian faith communities. For instance, we visited places that had significant numbers of groups such as new Polish migrants, some older Catholic families originating from Italy and/or a Scottish Gaelic community
- Its migrant history is typical of the region
- Catholic and Protestant communities are often found side by side
- It has a wide and distinctive mix of socio-economic groups, and, in particular, areas of wealth and of deprivation
- It is an area with many social centres, such as shops, socially active churches, libraries and pubs, and many local social groups
- It is of a suitable size and density to study strong social ties

First, we researched histories of the regions. Alongside this, we looked at the online presence of the local areas, to get a current impression of whether people there and in surrounding areas viewed it as a distinct social community. In some cases, we visited more than one candidate area and spoke to members of the community we met there, to decide which area to select and which to reject.

We also analysed demographic data, looking at relative deprivation in the datazones set out in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2012, and postcode-level data on ethnic group, religion, sex and age contained in the Scotland Census 2011. Hence, where we describe people in this appendix as 'Catholic', 'Protestant', 'Polish', and so on, we are usually referring to how they classified themselves in the 2011 Census.

When tendering for the project, we were asked to select five case study sites. We chose one case study site within each of the following five regions of Scotland. We picked these five regions because we felt they offered us the broadest range of participants, as regards understandings of sectarianism, that we could fit within an appropriate budget.

## **Region 1 – West: Strathclyde: Glasgow City**

In the West of Scotland there are areas characterised by the aftermath of a history of heavy industry and attendant Irish migration, more by men than women, and mainly Catholic but with a substantial Ulster Protestant element, particularly in Glasgow. Another substantial inward flow of Italian Catholics has taken place from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

Key sites for study include Glasgow, Greenock and Kilmarnock. We chose Glasgow for several reasons. It is one of Scotland's most diverse cities and a location for dispersal of asylum seekers and also the Roma/Slovakian community in Govanhill. The city has been substantial inward Irish migration over many generations, mainly Catholic but with a substantial Ulster Protestant element, particularly in Glasgow. Glasgow has also experienced a substantial inward flow of Italian and Polish Catholic migrants. It is very much a mixed city, in terms of both class and Christian religion.

27% of Glasgow residents' describe themselves as Catholic. Glasgow has a couple of postcodes where Catholics dominate, but it is very much a mixed city. It is the largest in Scotland and 45.5% of the 5% most deprived datazones in Scotland lie within Glasgow City. It also contains a small group of the least deprived datazones in Scotland.

## **Region 2 – Central: North Lanarkshire**

In central Scotland there are areas characterised by a history of heavy industry and mining. Here again Irish Catholics and Protestants, mostly from Ulster and many from drastically impoverished Donegal, came to take on semi-skilled labour. Some were brought in strategically for the purpose of strike-breaking, regardless of personal affiliation, thus ensuring a mixed welcome for them. Enmities from the home country also came with them. (Some of those enmities had themselves originally been imported there from Scotland.) Key potential sites for study included North Lanarkshire, North Ayrshire and West Lothian. The former two were the most troubled of the Irish Catholic migrant experiences in Scotland (Devine 2006: ch.21). We chose North Lanarkshire because it offered areas for study that were typical of the region's migrant history.

Glasgow City and North Lanarkshire have been most marked for charges of religiously-aggravated offending in Scotland:

	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of total</b>	<b>Per 100,000 popn</b>
Glasgow City	281	41%	47
North Lanarkshire	95	14%	29

## **Region 3 – South East: Midlothian: Edinburgh**

Elsewhere in Scotland there are more prosperous areas where there has never been extensive job conflict related to Irish migration, but nevertheless there has been some history of sectarian exclusion. Key sites for study include Edinburgh and Aberdeen. Here there are proximate Catholic and Protestant communities, but with many histories differing from those of West and Central Scotland. We chose

Edinburgh because of its importance in attracting new and old European migrant Catholics, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, particularly Poland and the Baltic lands. A small population remains in Edinburgh of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century migrants from Italy and Poland. The council areas with the highest proportions of 'White: Polish' in their population are Aberdeen City (7,000) and the City of Edinburgh (13,000), both 3% of the populations.

12% of Edinburgh's residents describe themselves as Catholic. There are no Catholic-dominated postcode areas, but several where they are a substantial group in the community and close to equal with those who describe themselves as Protestant. It has datazones that fall into the 5% most deprived in Scotland, but overall the level of income deprivation in Edinburgh City is below that in Scotland as a whole. Hence, as in the other case study sites, we find proximate Catholic and Protestant communities, but with many histories differing from those of West and Central Scotland.

#### **Region 4 – North East: Dundee**

Dundee was the only place in Scotland to have a large migrant Irish community who were predominantly women arrive in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Twice as many women as men migrated there to work in the jute mills, which mostly employed female labour. For several possible reasons (the city's rapid demographic diversification, the absence of Irish Protestant migrants (Devine 2006: 506), the differing social role of women), there was much less evidence of conflict (Gallagher 1987: 32).

18% of Dundee's residents describe themselves as Catholic. There is one Catholic-dominated postcode area, and some near 50%, but it is generally mixed. Most of Dundee City's datazones are found in the more deprived deciles. It is therefore a city marked by deprivation, but not by recorded conflict, making it another interesting site for comparison.

#### **Region 5 – Highlands & Islands: Eilean Siar: Western Isles**

Parts of the Highlands are markedly segregated, with long-established indigenous Catholic communities. They have an older history indicating Scottish Presbyterian antipathy to Scottish Catholics. Key sites for study include Wester Ross, Sutherland and the Western Isles.

Overall this site is 12% Catholic. Most of Eilean Siar's datazones are found in the middle deciles. None of its 36 datazones are found in the 15% most deprived or 15% least deprived datazones in Scotland. This does not mean there is no deprivation: rather that it is not concentrated in small areas. Despite the mixing of advantaged and disadvantaged communities, the level of separation by religion is unusually strong when compared to the rest of Scotland. There is little evidence of recorded religiously-aggravated offending, though, and the communities interact a great deal. Stories of sectarianism appear from time to time in the Scottish media but the Highlands and Islands tend not to have been included in recent qualitative research. The site contains many Gaelic-speaking Scots of long-standing.

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